

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 66

PRICE 80p



FRIENDSHIP

THE FRIENDS OF THE WESTERN BUDDHIST ORDER

2

None of us is complete; more or less by chance, we are tossed up by our conditioning — biological, psychological, social, and cultural — as partial beings. Our future lies in each one of us making something of him or herself: making of that miscellaneous bundle of conditionings a happy, free, clear-minded, and emotionally radiant individual.

The conscious growth of a truly human being is the ultimate heroic act left to us. If we so choose, we can develop within ourselves a vivid awareness of existence, a powerful positivity towards all that lives, and an inexhaustible dynamism. Ultimately, we can become 'Buddhas', enlightened or fully awakened individuals who have totally liberated themselves from the bondage of subjective conditioning and who have a direct and intuitive understanding of reality.

One who commits himself or herself to this ideal of individual growth is a Buddhist. So the Western Buddhist Order is a fellowship of men and women who have explicitly committed themselves, in a simple ceremony, to furthering their own and others' development.

The Order forms the nucleus of a new society or culture in which the values of human growth are para-

mount. As a result of Order members taking responsibility each for their own lives and attempting to communicate honestly and openly with others, that new society is becoming a living reality. In those areas where Order members have gathered together there are found three things: Communities, Co-operatives, and Centres.

In communities, Order members and Mitras (literally 'Friends': people who, after some initial contact with Order members, have decided they wish to deepen their communication) live together in numbers varying between four and thirty. In these, a new and radical way of life is being forged, which encourages and inspires community members to grow. They are usually either for men or for women so as to break down the habitual psychological and social patterns usually found in our relationships with members of the opposite sex which so much inhibit growth. Often, community members will pool all their earnings in a 'common purse' from which all expenses, communal and individual, will be met. The flavour of the communities is as varied as the people within them.

In the Co-operatives, groups of Order members, Mitras, and Friends (those who are in contact with the Movement and participate in any of its activities) work

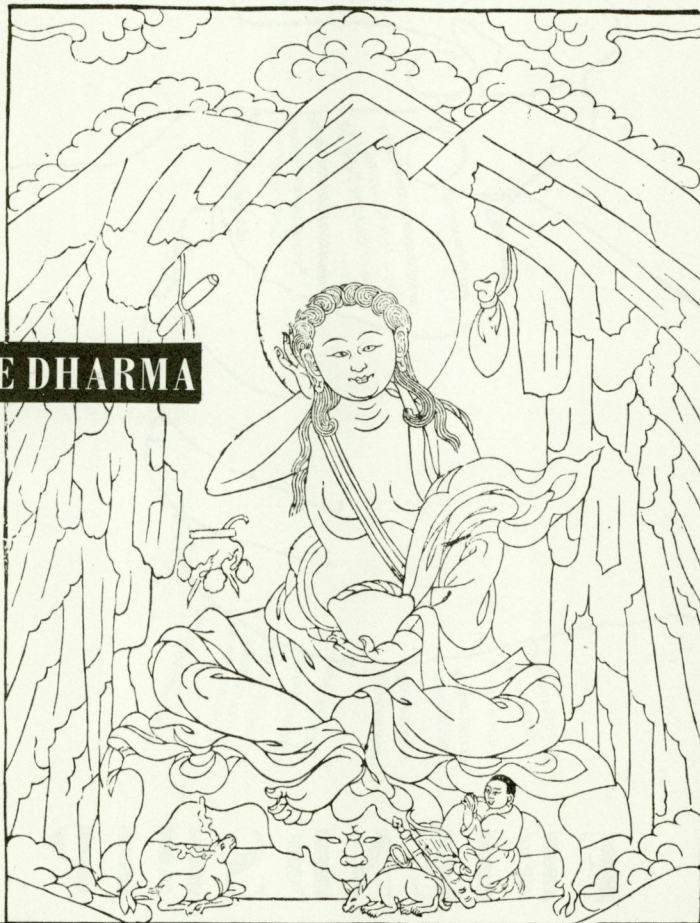
together in businesses which financially support the workers and which fund the further expansion of this New Society. Present businesses either running or being set up in the Movement include a printing press, wholefood shops, a silkscreen press, a hardware store, cafes, a second-hand shop, bookshop, editorial service, metal-work forge, and graphic design, photographic and film studio. Members of the Co-operatives are hammering out a way of working which is 'Right Livelihood': team-based so that each person has the opportunity to take responsibility for the work, and ethically sound: exploiting neither other people nor the earth's resources. Work is done not for remuneration, but for its value as a means of development (in what other situation might your workmates suggest that you go for a walk or do some meditation when you seem run down?) and from a spirit of generosity. Each worker either works voluntarily or is given what he or she needs to live.

The most direct and effective means to the evolution of consciousness is the practice of meditation. At the Centres, members of the Order teach meditation and conduct courses, study groups, talks, and discussions on the principles and practice of Buddhism. There are

also ceremonies, festivals, and arts activities. Yoga, massage, and other practices are taught as valuable, though less central, methods of development. Centres are places where you can make contact with Order members and others already in touch with this burgeoning New Society. Above all, through the Centres, a bridge is formed over which those who wish may cross to a new and total way of life based upon the growth and development of individuals.

The Friends of the Western Buddhist Order ('the Friends') is, then, a movement, always deepening and expanding, of people who wish to be authentic, integrated and dynamic. It was initiated in 1967 by the Ven. Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita, who spent 20 years in India as a Buddhist monk. He there studied, practised, and had contact with all the main traditional schools of Buddhism and returned to the West with a clear awareness that, though its essence remains the same, Buddhism always expresses itself anew in each new age and climate. The 'Friends' is the response of the Buddhist tradition of insight and experience to the circumstances of the modern West. It is an increasingly widespread movement with some twenty Centres and Branches throughout the world.

LISTENING TO THE DHARMA



Over 200 taped lectures on Buddhism by The Venerable Sangharakshita and Members of the Order give you unique access to the Dharma.

For our new catalogue, please send a stamped addressed envelope to DHARMACHAKRA, 51 Roman Rd, London E2 OHU

The NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 85

Editor
Nagabodhi

Published Quarterly by
The Friends of the
Western Buddhist Order
51 Roman Road, London
E2 0HU. Tel: 01 980 5972

President
The Ven. Maha Sthavira
Sangharakshita

Layout & Design
Nagabodhi, Judy Child
Shantavira

Editorial Assistance
Shantavira, Judy Child

Typesetting
Windhorse Photosetters
247 Globe Road, London
E2 0HU. Tel: 01 981 1407

Printers
Aldate Press
84b Whitechapel High St.
London E1 01 247 3015

© Windhorse Publications
1985

Subscriptions
£4.00 pa (Surface mail)
(£5.50 airmail)
Please make cheques and
P.O.s payable to:
Windhorse Publications

Cover Design
Dhammarati

Subscription address:
136 Renfield St.,
Glasgow G2 4U

EDITORIAL

Back in the playground, friendship was a serious matter. 'If you do this I'll be your best friend.' Or, 'If you don't do that, I won't be your friend any more' ... These were fabulous promises, terrible threats: the alphas and omegas of school life. It was of course accepted without question that a friend was something one wanted, and that to lose one could be a significant disaster. Children make friends, seek them out, honour and defend them. And even if they are a bit fickle, and go in for categorising each other as 'best friends' and 'worst friends', the fact remains that they have an instinctive grasp that friendship plays a crucial part in their lives.

In the East, friendship seems to survive the transition into adult life. In India, for example, people of all ages spend substantial amounts of time with their friends each and every day, gravitating towards them in order to share chores and tasks, meeting up in the evenings at familiar landmarks to while away a few hours in a talk. They laugh, shout and argue with their friends, and don't feel at all strange about wandering the streets — or even cycling through the choked lanes — arm in arm, or hand in hand. In Islamic countries, 'Brotherhood', the forging of powerful, intimate friendships between men is frankly acknowledged as a sacred ideal, an integral part of the Muslim's religious duty.

According to all scriptural accounts, the Buddha constantly upheld the importance of friendship. He encouraged his followers to practise and study together, and to co-operate in their efforts to find alms. He urged them to regard their fellow disciples as kin, and to care for each other in sickness and old age. He told his impetuous disciple Meghiya that Kalyana Mitrata, or 'spiritual friendship', is the first thing that has to be cultivated by one who is spiritually immature. And, of course, there is the famous occasion on which he asserted that the kind of friendships one can cultivate with other spiritually motivated people constitute the whole of the spiritual life.

'Oh no!' I hear you say. 'Not that old chestnut again!' Well perhaps that quotation does tend to appear rather frequently in FWBO literature — as does our preoccupation with the theme of friendship itself. It is not long, after all, since we reviewed Stuart Millar's *Men and Friendship*, and it is only four years since we devoted an entire issue of the *Newsletter* to the theme.

However, the fact has to be faced that friendship is not something that comes naturally or easily to adults in the West. It is as if, for most of us, any real desire to develop close emotional bonds with those around us, other than our sexual partners, or perhaps — but not inevitably — with the members of our immediate families, has been left behind in the playground along with the skipping ropes and chromium-plated six-shooters.

If we are going to benefit at all from one of the Buddha's central teachings, then many of us almost certainly need to be reminded, encouraged, and even goaded from time to time, into an appreciation of the importance of friendships. Then, and perhaps only then, will we make the effort required to turn our casual associations, or emotionally lukewarm friendships into the intensely pleasurable transforming agents that they could be.

Nagabodhi

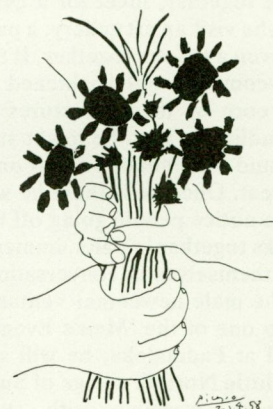
CONTENTS

FEATURES

Why Friendship?	4
Women & Friendship	7
A Friendship	10
Kindred Spirits	12

FACETS

Britain	15
International	19



WHY FRIENDSHIP?

by JAYAMATI

The newcomer to the FWBO might be forgiven for thinking that he has hit upon an organisation devoted to the making of friendships. He has come along to a centre for any one of myriad reasons: possibly to understand the nature of existence, to plumb the depths of his own psyche, to experience higher states of consciousness, or to gain insight into Buddhist philosophy. Soon after his arrival, however, he will be confronted with 'communications exercises', in which he is encouraged to make meaningful contact with another human being and to dismantle the barriers in his communication with them. He will be taught the *metta bhavana* meditation practice, through which he will learn to develop positive emotions towards himself and towards other human beings. During the tea break at the meditation class he will probably receive the friendly attention of an Order member or mitra, who will be happy to engage him in warm, personal conversation. After he has been attending classes quite regularly for a while, the Order member may well suggest that it would be good if they could spend more time together, meet for a chat, maybe visit an art gallery, a park or even a theatre together. If the newcomer is not frightened to his core by these overtures of friendliness, then he might stay around long enough to go on a retreat. Once he is there he will then notice people going off for walks together in pairs, immersing themselves in conversation. If the male newcomer ventures onto one of the 'Men's Events' held at Padmaloka, he will see the little Norfolk village of Surlingham swarming with such pairs — usually an Order member with a mitra or friend. By

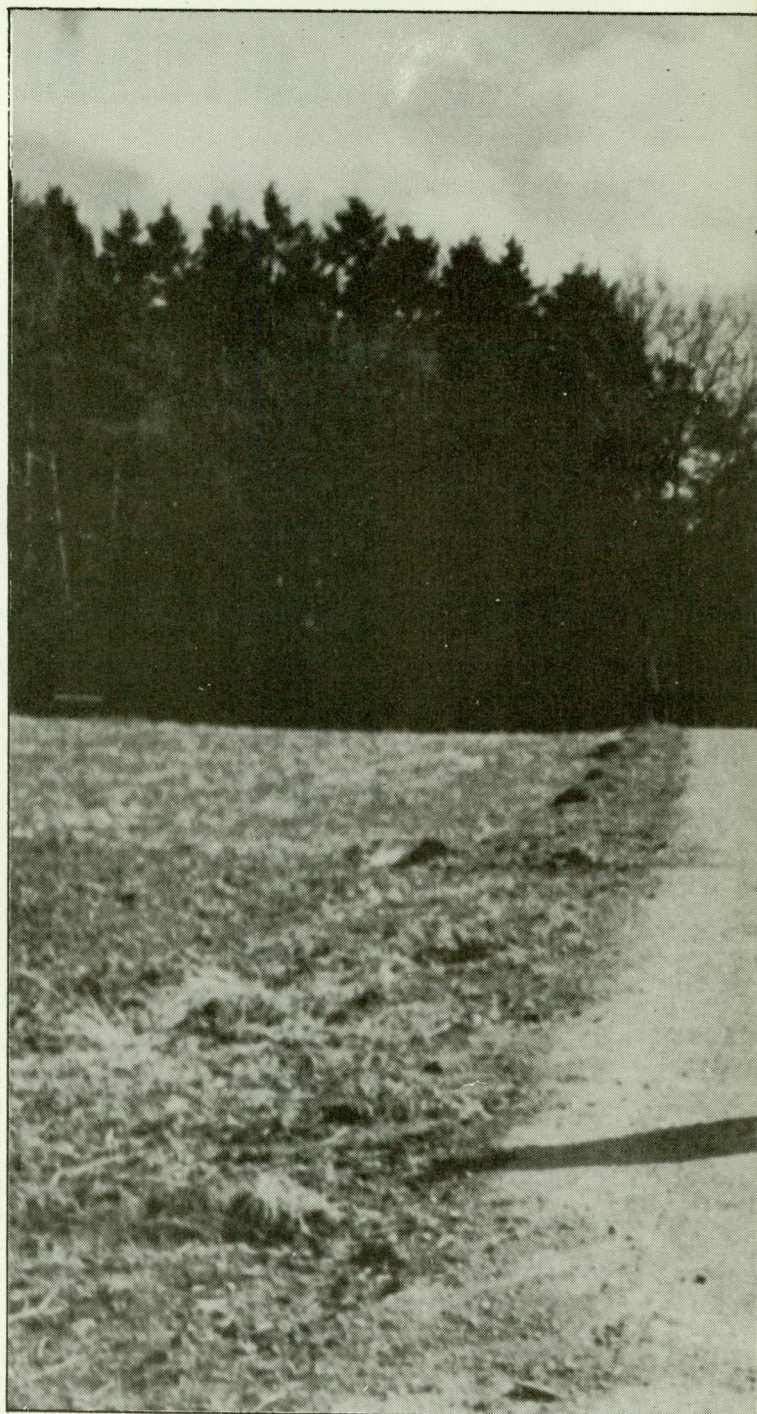
now the realisation will be sinking in that the FWBO actively encourages people to meet, to get to know each other, and to develop friendships. But he may well wonder why there should be this emphasis. It doesn't seem to be very mystical or esoteric; compared to the fantastic stories one hears about Zen or Tantric Buddhism, it all looks rather tame, perhaps even a trifle 'English'. What has this making of friends and developing of 'loving kindness' for all beings got to do with Buddhism?

The 'plot' is further compounded when the newcomer hears about the 'Three Jewels' of Buddhism. The third of these 'Jewels' is the *Sangha*, which he discovers means the 'Spiritual Community': those people who are following the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha exhorted his disciples to 'take refuge' in the *Sangha*, to make one's communication with others who are following the spiritual life a central aspect of one's own path. Our newcomer may now begin to understand that this emphasis on communicating with other people within the FWBO is not indicative of some new, revolutionary form of Buddhism, nor is it an excuse for a friendship bureau, but has a direct bearing on the Buddha's fundamental teaching, and as such is an expression of traditional Buddhism. This discovery may be reassuring but it may still fail to explain why friendship has a bearing on following a spiritual path in the modern world. After all, those people are not just talking and making friends simply because the Buddha said it was a good idea. Presumably they do so because they experience tangible benefits from it. So what are the advantages to be gained from making those efforts? Why did the Buddha uphold the supreme importance of spiritual

friendship?

Man is a social animal; he is gregarious by nature and is therefore being consistent with his nature when he interacts with others. He experiences himself in relation to others as much as he experiences himself alone; he gets to know himself in terms of his responses to others. The greatest source of experience that most of us achieve is gained in our interaction with people. The Buddha's teaching seeks to help each individual to attain the ultimate in human perfection (Enlightenment) by transforming his 'nature' into a superhuman state. All of one's nature has to be transformed to achieve this exalted goal. It follows that we cannot leave out any part of ourselves. A major portion of ourselves is experienced as 'so-

cial' and gregarious, and it is therefore crucial for us to transform this aspect of ourselves as well. Thus man must place his human relations on the path that he traverses on his way to further development. His human relations will, after all, reflect his own subjective state of consciousness. If his relations with others are changing, then he himself will be changing. Those elements, for example, which we find hard to accept in other people are often a direct reflection of the parts of ourselves which we are loath to acknowledge. The 'Sangha Jewel' therefore puts us and our progress on the spot! One experiences one's nature, one's actual state of being, when in the company of other people. If left to our own devices, we could easily im-





agine that we are in a much better, healthier, more advanced state than we actually are. The Sangha brings our appreciation of the Buddha and his teachings right into our own front rooms. It obliges us to accept the Dharma in all areas of our lives — it is the 'kitchen sink' aspect of the spiritual life. The newcomer will perceive by now that all the walking and talking, communication and metta bhavana, are an implementation (and experience) of the Buddha's path towards Enlightenment.

When one 'Goes for Refuge' to the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, one does so as completely as possible. But how does one Go for Refuge to the Sangha, making it a central principle in one's life? The

simple, practical answer is to make a friendship with one other person. It is unrealistic to attempt to 'love' the Sangha unless you can love a single member of it. Unless you can meaningfully and deeply engage with at least one member of the Sangha, your Going for Refuge to the third Jewel will be largely academic and theoretical. The third Jewel starts to shine on the formation of a 'spiritual friendship'. That is a friendship that has at its heart a shared spiritual ideal which enables it to rise above the confusions of more mundane human associations. Most human relations are founded on mutual need. One has a need for love, comfort, emotional support, sex, affection and attention, and we look to someone who will provide

these for us. We may feel incomplete unless we are able to find such a person (or persons), and when we do find them we generally live with them or marry them. In this kind of relationship we need the other person to service our physical or psychological needs. If these needs are not conscious, or acknowledged to the other person, then we will probably manipulate the relationship to arrange things so that they can be met. If we are not conscious of our needs then we are in danger of exploiting our friends. To establish a spiritual friendship, it is essential that both parties are intent on becoming independent individuals, able to cope with their own emotional states, and to experience them in a responsible way. Unless this aspiration is

clearly felt, then the tendency towards dependencies and a limited kind of friendship is assured. When two people have a strong, shared ideal, it becomes possible for them to relate closely and intimately with each other, without forming neurotic attachments. Dependence on another person is antithetical to the spiritual life because it implies that one is unable to be an individual in one's own right, unable to feel complete in oneself. Our friends too are unable to be themselves in relation to us if we impose a precondition that they must perform a certain function for us to enable the friendship to survive. Everyone has needs. It is part of our 'social' nature to feel the need for human contact in many and various ways. Through meditation prac-

tice we become aware of these needs and can adopt a realistic and guiltless attitude towards them. Once aware of our needs, we can communicate them honestly and openly, and we can include them in the friendship constructively. They can be given the appropriate attention with the conscious agreement of both parties. Once they have been serviced and acknowledged, the friendship is clear and prepared for even higher attainments. Two people healthily acknowledging their needs and working towards spiritual progress are very well placed to develop a deeply loving and unshakably reliable friendship. A friendship of this kind can continually deepen if it allows for the constant changing and development of the persons within it. Thus a spiritual friendship is not a fixed friendship; the protagonists can never assume a role within it.

The newcomer, assuming that he has stayed the course, will by now appreciate that the formation of real friendship is highly prized in the Buddhist view of the spiritual life. He might, however, think it is going a bit far when he hears that the making of spiritual friendships comprises 'the whole of the spiritual life'. This is the teaching that the Buddha gave to Ananda, his beloved disciple, cousin, and personal attendant for more than twenty years. Did the Buddha really mean by this that in developing a spiritual friendship one is practising all that one needs to become fully developed, ultimately perfect: Enlightened? What is it about friendship that prompted the Buddha to say that it is enough to take a human being to the threshold of the Transcendental and beyond? It suggests that by forming real and meaningful contact with one other person, one can learn all that is necessary for the attainment of the goal of the spiritual life: Nirvana, Enlightenment! Surely this is going too far. How can contact with an ordinary human being be so far-reaching that it can lead to Enlightenment? The suggestion would seem to be that it is possible to deepen one's friendship with another human being to the point at which all knowledge and understanding is included.

The late Dharmachari Vangisa once gave me a superb explanation of how this should be possible. Every human being, he said, encompasses an element of reality. The consciousness of each individual has en-

countered elements, or aspects, of reality; each individual has known aspects of Absolute Truth. Depending on the extent to which those elements of Truth have been absorbed, the consciousness will take appropriate form when reborn into this world. Each human being is a manifestation of consciousness. The level of consciousness determines the form that is taken at birth (or rebirth as the Buddhist would term it). If a high level of consciousness is attained in one lifetime, then that consciousness will 'seek' to be reborn in an advantageous form, such as that of a healthy human being who has access to the means of further development. If a low level of consciousness is attained, then a low form of rebirth is sought (e.g. an animal). A human being is the 'result' of a particular form of consciousness that may have been developing throughout lifetimes. There is a vast amount of experience of Reality contained within the consciousness of each human being. There is not only the accumulated experience of this current lifetime, but also the experience gained in previous lifetimes, and that gained in dimensions that go beyond human experience, time and place. The consciousness does not stop or die when it leaves human form. Each human being is exceedingly rich in terms of consciousness already achieved and consciousness that can be further developed. Therefore, when we meet another human being, two extraordinary sets of experiences (both realised and in potential) come into contact with each other. When two human beings really begin to open up to each other they are on the threshold of unimaginable discoveries. If they pass beyond the threshold and really get to know each other, they will find themselves entering an entirely new world, meeting elements of reality that are completely new to them.

These elements will appear strange at times. They require that we make adjustments to ourselves so that we can understand them. To absorb the realities contained within another person we will have to change ourselves. We cannot hope to get to know someone without being affected ourselves. It will require time and great care to adjust to this mutual sharing of experience. Trust must be established to allow that sharing to unfold. It is obvious that both people in the friendship must be free to be themselves. If people play games

with each other, or relate in terms of roles, then this essential meeting of two real people will not take place. The communication will be restricted and the benefits will be psychological rather than spiritual.

The formation of a friendship will demand courage, because to be 'real' is demanding. It is sometimes easier to pretend that we are something that we are not, and to pretend that our friend is something that he is not. To come to terms with what is really going on in oneself and in one's friend can be a salutary experience. Honesty in communication is vital; it allows for the parameters of the friendship to be expanding continuously. If both parties are intent on being truthful, then they can only help each other move towards a deeper comprehension of Absolute Truth. A spiritual friendship will not acknowledge any barriers; there can be no areas of communication that are outside the terms of that friendship. Ultimately, a spiritual friendship will be entirely free of restrictions and limitations.

A friendship of this kind can not be entered into lightly. When two people are sufficiently impressed by one another that they want to establish this bond of 'spiritual friendship' between them, then they may, in the context of the FWBO enter into a 'publically acknowledged' bond. Such a relationship is known as one of Kalyana Mitrata, or a 'spiritual friendship'. It is normally undertaken by a mitra and two Order members. The mitra wants to take his or her development more seriously and to deepen contact with the Order, or spiritual community. The most effective way in which this can be done is in the developing of a spiritual friendship with two Order members, for through the medium of such a friendship, further development is more or less assured. If all parties take their responsibility to the friendship seriously, then all of them will undoubtedly benefit. To emphasise the importance of this kind of friendship, and to 'formalise' the bond between those involved, the Venerable Sangharakshita, or a senior Order member, will conduct a simple ceremony which acknowledges and affirms the bond that has been established, and emphasises the mutual commitments involved. But spiritual friendships are not of course limited to mitras and Order members. Order members form special links with each other which develop into the kind

described.

The Enlightenment experience has been conveyed as 'seeing the nature of Absolute Reality', a state in which one's consciousness is able to absorb the truth contained in all things throughout time and space. Spiritual friendship is a microcosm of that Enlightenment experience. In getting to know new and unfamiliar elements of reality as embodied in a close friend, one is opening up to elements of reality that are distinct from oneself. To allow these to penetrate one's being is to allow unknown elements of reality to affect one's consciousness. It is like a rehearsal for Enlightenment itself, in that we absorb the reality of another human being into our being. Through the friendship we master the ability to allow those elements of reality to affect us and change us. As we learn to absorb those elements of reality, so we increase our capacity to take on more. The spiritual friendship increases both people's abilities to go further. If we keep opening up to the vast spaces of consciousness to which the friendship offers access, we shall be drawing closer to a realisation of Absolute Reality.

The necessity for making real friendships dawns with one's spiritual maturity. This maturity is achieved gradually. To prepare for the mighty benefits that arise from a spiritual friendship, one must first learn how to reveal oneself to other people, to be honest and direct in one's communication, and not inhibited by psychological awkwardness. To cultivate a healthy regard for and interest in others it is vital to develop one's capacity for positive emotions. Without positive feelings one simply cannot form a friendship. It is for these reasons that the newcomer to an FWBO centre will be introduced to the metta bhavana meditation practice in the first week or two of his or her involvement. This is why there will be sessions of communication exercises at the classes, and why the friendly talks and walks are taking place. All these seemingly incidental activities are in fact a direct preparation for the time when the newcomer will be able to take advantage of spiritual friendship, while the spiritual friendship itself will be a direct preparation for the splendours of Enlightenment.



WOMEN AND FRIENDSHIP

From Ideals to Action by Ashokashri

In what is generally referred to as 'traditional society', woman had very few options available to her. She usually married. Even in more intellectual circles she could not move freely unless she was married. She lived almost exclusively in the isolated units of her family. The family is a group which is concerned primarily with its own permanence, with minute interests and exclusive demands, in which the individual woman has to sacrifice her chances of any higher fulfillment. She would therefore primarily relate to her family: to her husband and in particular to the other female members. Her friendships would be with her sisters, mother, aunts and daughters. She might perhaps develop a few friendships through women's clubs and, if she was lucky enough to belong to the 'lower classes', with her neighbours as well. These friendships would be based on the women's mutual concern for their own families. They would last as long as each friend did not challenge the homeostasis of her friend's family. One's own family always came first. A woman's

family was her domain and needed her protection from outside intrusions. If a friend's child started doing better than her own, for example, her instinctive impulse would be to protect her own child.

The outcome of such a life would have been a complete immersion in the daily concerns and worries of the family which, if she was not careful, would become a matter of 'cultivating the cares of life', as it did in André Gide's *La Symphonie Pastorale* for the pastor's wife Amelie and his daughter Sarah:

"Sarah is not, alas, what her mother was at her age when we were first engaged, but what the material cares of life have made her - I was going to say the *cultivation of the cares of life*, for Amelie certainly does cultivate them...

"I cannot see that Sarah has any interests that are not vulgar; like her mother, she allows herself to be entirely taken up with paltry household matters; the very features of her face, unilluminated as they are by any inward flame, look dull and almost hard. She has no taste for poetry or for reading in general; I never overhear

any conversation between her and her mother in which I have any inclination to take part..."

Before marriage, other women were potential wives for the man she had her eye on, so some kind of alliance was necessary, but very seldom did it go beyond an alliance of huntresses together. Rarely was it possible for a woman to have any other choice or to have friends outside her family interest.

Fortunately there have been great changes over the course of recent years. A woman's prime concern need no longer be to find a husband and to propagate a family. Whereas previously, with such an involvement in everyday cares and concerns, she was so immersed in the 'cultivation of the cares of life' that she had no time to consider her own development, she is now free to consider certain options. She can decide whether she wishes to marry, whether to have children or whether to follow a career. The greatest advantage brought about by this change is that she can now choose to dedicate herself totally to her own spiritual development and to that of others.

Likewise, the nature of her

friendships has changed. She can now develop friendships through her work, and most importantly, she can develop spiritual friendships with other women. The criterion is no longer one family with (or against) the other, but a reciprocal concern for individuals. Such friendship is based on mutual concern for each other's individual development.

The woman who chooses to have a family and who also wishes to develop spiritually can, to the extent that she transcends her primary instinctual identification with, and protection of, the family, direct her emotional commitment towards her development as an individual. Since bringing up a family means at least some immersion in group activities, with its pressures of petty personal interests and daily concerns and worries, the woman who places herself in this position must always be working to resist 'the cultivation of the cares of life'.

A commitment to the ideal of spiritual development cannot take place in the abstract. A lifestyle needs to be evolved which will give expression to this ideal, and which will provide the ideal with a more aware, more creative expression, which allows for the total development of the woman's individuality - out of which she can communicate as an individual among other individuals. Such a situation will be created when women come together whose primary uniting factor is the desire to look radically at their lifestyles, and who have the emotional freedom to create a situation which is totally supportive to their emerging individuality. To do this they must be prepared to leave aside present emotional involvements, such as boyfriends who may provide a certain sexual and emotional satisfaction, but who hold them back from pursuing higher aims. They must learn to trust other women, and look towards them for the satisfaction of their needs, and for giving them inspiration. They will then be able to create a lifestyle which will not be eroded by male-female polarisation, but which supports their individuality. This does not mean that a woman has to turn away from all men. There are a few men who can be helpful, able to provide guidance in her spiritual development, but any sexual or confused emotional involvement will not help a woman's individuality to develop. For this reason the man has to be mature and clear enough so

that he can act primarily as a strong Kalyana Mitra, or spiritual friend. Few are.

Within this team of women it will be necessary to acknowledge that some women have more emotional energy available with which to commit themselves to their development; they will have a greater spiritual vision. Such a woman, or such women, will stand out as the leader, or leaders. The pseudo-egalitarian view, prevalent among many contemporary women, which dictates that all women can act equally, and that no leader is therefore necessary, or allowing ambitious but spiritually or emotionally undeveloped leaders to emerge and impose their will, can cause unnecessary confusions. Without a leader the team will be at the mercy of the chaotic interests of each person, and lack direction. With the team under the control of a socially ambitious woman there can be no individual development. Another pitfall is woman's tendency to become passive, leaving the leader to take sole responsibility. Women need guidance; they need to recognize that some people can take greater responsibility, have a greater vision, *but* each woman must take responsibility for herself and act out of her own strength alongside her 'leader-friend'. From personal experience I have seen this happen again and again; when the more committed woman is away, others become more responsible but, even with continual encouragement to keep this responsible attitude, the others gradually fall back when she returns. Perhaps centuries of passiveness and hegemony are to blame but it has to be surmounted for a woman to develop.

This team must give a project form. This will be the foundation on which to turn the envisaged into the actual. Without a tangible project there is nothing that a woman's emergent individuality can establish itself in. Just as it cannot emerge within the traditional family set-up, it can no more emerge in a vacuum. Through working on a project alongside other women, a woman will in fact be creating herself. Working with others, which may start as a necessity, soon becomes her primary and most joyful concern — the project draws out her depth of character and individuality. She can no longer be concerned only with her own petty interests. To hold on to petty self concerns which do nothing for one and which cause harm to

others will be seen in that light and desired no longer. They are replaced by the importance on putting the project into effect and thus fulfilling one's friends' interests as well. In this way a woman also begins to transcend her own limitations, to understand others and develop friendships.

If this project is to go ahead then it will have to be in harmony with the desired goal, involving each person's real interest. The ideal behind the project has to be held in mind continuously and actualized, for otherwise it will be lost sight of. The new lifestyle yet

ing truer vision of the world to another in a way which helps her not only to understand it intellectually, but also to live and practise in accordance with it. This requires an ability to communicate the vision quite intimately, quite freshly to our friend or friends, without the barriers of fixed conventions, an ability to open ourselves to another, to feel for and with them. This can lead to a discovery of what this vision actually *means* when taken into everyday life, an exploration of how to make the ideal actual without turning it into the ordinary. This we can call the highest

and it is vital that they do so. I have observed that the lack of self confidence is invariably tied to competitiveness. Perhaps there is still the thought that only one woman can marry the man; the others are 'losers'. So often a woman feels that she is either the winner or the loser and feels confident, or diffident, accordingly. Competitiveness which brings out the best in each other is to be encouraged, while competitiveness which cannot rejoice in another's achievement only continues this dichotomy. By rejoicing in her friend's merits a woman reverses this tendency, and by



Khadiravani — Communication exercises

to be created will become the ordinary, and the ordinary will become nothing other than 'the cultivation of the cares of life'. The ideal is often considered undesirable and even ignored because it is so hard for it to become actual; but it is in fact something to be imagined with a clear mind and a free heart, so that its beauty can be a guiding force.

It requires courage to turn vision into actuality; it requires the *courage to be intimate*, the courage to hold the vision firmly in mind and at the same time connect intimately with a friend. In that very personal, unbounded contact we can help our friends to experience that same vision or at least a part of it. It is no good imposing ourselves, or the greater truth we have realised, onto other people. We can only identify with them, while still holding our vision clearly in mind, and help them move towards it. This is the true basis of friendship: impart-

achievement available to a woman. When this actually happens we feel most in harmony with the purpose of life and we are enriched in the process; our ability to communicate our vision has broadened and our friend's life has taken on a higher dimension. The result is a feeling of harmony and relatedness which all women strive for.

Working together now becomes a joint effort; those with greater vision sharing with those who have less, each accepting the other's limitations fully while still offering encouragement. As the efforts reap rewards, self confidence is built up, a feeling of potency — that you can achieve, you can create the kind of life you wish for — arises. You can then encourage others to step out and do likewise.

Self confidence is the thing that women lack most. It is, however, a quality they can develop when working in a team,

having something tangible and practical to work on she can begin to feel her own real strength. Through engaging her energies in the project, more of her comes to life, a regeneration takes place — a new woman is born who is both sensitive to the world and active for the good of it.

So far the necessity of a project has been enunciated. Now the project itself needs definition. What will this alternative life style consist of? Let us turn to William Gerhardt's *Tolstoy* for the key,

"A simplicity of living which leaves one with a surplus store of energy and goodwill, which it is sheer joy to harness in the service of others who on their side are particularly placed in regard to you.

"And the alternative? The swelling of your own little ego into a prickly pear of touchiness, whose pricks were two-edged swords, wounding yourself as

much as your foe."

The choice becomes obvious. The swelling of one's own ego along with its two-edged swords can be attractive only to those with tendencies towards masochism. It must be transcended in that simplicity of living that Tolstoy calls for. This is the new lifestyle we must create.

For an example of a movement towards this new lifestyle we can turn to 'Khadiravani' community in South London.

Simplicity of living does not mean threadbare and tatty surroundings but ones which are uncluttered, elegant and attractive. To keep the atmosphere free from sexual games, argument and emotional dependencies, no men are invited into the house. Each woman is free to experience herself away from such sexual polarisation and to develop her own sensitivity and potency. It is not enough to have the external structure alone; the 'surplus store of energy' thus cre-

festival of friendship with lectures, films and plays on different aspects of friendship in different times, from Dr. Johnson to Bloomsbury, from the Greeks to the Romantics, each evoking a new dimension of what could perhaps be called an archetype of friendship. How we experience this archetype can be seen more clearly by looking at a particular example. Through watching the film 'A Time There Was', a film on the friendship between Benjamin Britten and Sir Peter Pears, the qualities of their great love for and confidence in each other come to life. When we see this film we experience how, through these qualities, they brought out the best in each other and understand why each man became as great as he did. Through this kind of encounter such qualities become part of ourselves. They now need to be practised to be maintained.

Other elements are important

Croydon's Rainbow Co-operative is renowned for its hard work. We work hard and play accordingly, and we accomplish much. Members of 'Khadiravani' support themselves by running a wholefood shop and yoga classes, and by doing various art projects for the Centre and Co-operative.

For work to be rewarding it needs to be efficient and commercially successful. There also needs to be a sense of joy and satisfaction. Work is a very tangible situation in which to overcome one's own "prickly pear of touchiness", to lay aside personal wants and experience the welfare of the whole situation. Tolstoy says it all when he talks of "...the sheer joy to harness (energy and goodwill) in the service of others who on their side are particularly placed in regard to you." Without such an attitude nothing is really achieved in terms of financial success, nor in terms of one's own spiritual development and har-

or through participating in our everyday life. In the future we will be holding beginners' meditation classes for women only, to contact a new range of women in South London and in this way we hope to expand the network of the FWBO.

All these different facets of our daily life are equally important, each feeding the next and making up the whole shape of a very rich and enriching life, a life that does not have the usual complicating factors which inhibit the total personality from being drawn into our spiritual development: a life which is rich, but simple.

Setting up a project such as this needs great dedication and determination. To form a team demands a lot of ground-work which must be done if we want to be fully effective. All members of the team have to be quite clear that they are going in the same direction. In the process, deep friendships will be forged. All need to have faith that there is a totally new, fully satisfying life for women, faith that the Dharma does speak to women and to women as growing individuals, that there are other women who do not want boyfriends, families or careers to be their main concern, but who want to live a full-time spiritual life. All need faith that through wholehearted commitment to the Three Jewels and to the Venerable Sangharakshita, the Buddha's vision will gradually be actualised and that it is possible to create increasingly perfect conditions for spiritual development. They need faith that that vision can be realised more fully by women now than conditions have ever allowed for before. There will be times when one feels like giving up, but to give up would be to compromise and that would mean death.

Eventually, through hard work and devotion within the team and the growing satisfaction of friendships, the rewards will pour forth like jewels from the mouth of the majestic figure Jambhala. A new dimension comes into being, plans take off with an ease they never had before. Each woman emerges, finds her place, and takes her position firmly in the team, which then expands into new directions.

The greatest reward is the confidence acquired in the ability to create a situation which is instrumental in women's individual development. In this way we are gradually getting nearer to forming that genuinely radical alternative for women.



At work in the Croydon Co-op

ated needs to be kept alive and bright through our various activities. In search of recreation we do not look towards social events like parties but towards the enjoyment of the arts. Exploring Shelley's thoughts on love together, as a key to ethical behaviour, for example, or Rothko's attack on consumerism and our experience of his paintings, engenders an intimacy and joy far beyond that brought about by the precarious, dull enjoyment of the mingling of the sexes.

In the Arts Centre at Croydon, another facet of life at 'Khadiravani', we have been pursuing a

in our daily life: regular meditation practice, study and puja performed together, or just sitting in silence, 'being' - as one community member termed it - 'beside a friend'. A lot has already been said on the merits of meditation, study and puja - there is no need to elaborate any further here, except to note that these are even more beneficial when performed in the company of friends.

I still meet abhorrence in some people, particularly in women, when physical work is mentioned. To work hard is still considered dirty, 'Alright for those who need to, but not for me'.

mony with the team.

Apart from giving support to various aspects of the movement, the Co-operative exists to support both the Buddhist and the Arts Centre. In our Buddhist activities, to which we all contribute by leading or supporting classes, is found another important aspect of our life. Sharing the Dharma with others, and particularly with those who are meeting the Dharma for the first time, is very rewarding. 'Khadiravani' itself is now functioning as a centre for women from all over the FWBO who wish to experience a more intense situation, either on a retreat

A FRIENDSHIP

by VAJRAKETU

Ruchiraketu and I had friendship thrust upon us. It began in April 1980, when Buddhadasa suggested we took over from him as joint managers of Friends Building Service (FBS), a Right Livelihood business supporting the London Buddhist Centre (LBC). We had both joined the business in January, but I can hardly remember him from those first three months, though we must have travelled out every day in the same van, eaten meals in the same cafes, attended the same team meetings. Our backgrounds, temperaments and interests were quite different so we were not drawn to each other.

But then we took over running the business. As a working partnership we were ideally matched. His caution and my impulsiveness went well together. Ruchiraketu is a trained telephone engineer, technically very able, capable of wiring, plumbing, building or repairing almost anything. I knew how to organise and run a business. We had a team of a dozen or so men from all sorts of backgrounds, all Buddhists, full of enthusiasm but mostly lacking in technical training.

Ruchiraketu carried most of the responsibility for personnel. He was extremely good with people, patient and caring. I would always be wanting everyone to work harder, he would be concerned that people weren't pushed too much. He kept having to remind me that this was Right Livelihood as well as a business. He was also very good at passing on his skills to others, teaching plumbing and electrics with a patience that astounded me, and occasionally irritated me too, since jobs often went much more slowly than if he had done them himself.

It was an exciting time – the business went well, we made lots of money for the LBC; there was a buzz in the air, everyone was happy. We all learned things – about building, about work, about

Right Livelihood. It was an adventure, and it was fun.

Week by week, month by month, Ruchiraketu and I grew closer. We had to trust each other and we were not disappointed. The objective needs of getting things done cut through barriers much more effectively than hours of polite conversation could have done. We had arguments. We had to acknowledge weaknesses, admit mistakes, rely on each other. An easy familiarity grew up between us.

And then there was Ratnaketu. For a long while he was our main contact with the Order. He worked in FBS, and the three of us lived in Sukhavati, the large men's community above the Centre. Ratnaketu was very warm and unrestrained in his enthusiasm and affections, it was difficult not to respond to him, and we both grew very close to him. Ratnaketu worked very hard at extending the links between us outside of the business, and in time the three of us became a recognisable unit – at work, in the community, at classes, socially. We would talk of going off together and starting an FWBO Centre somewhere. Having a common friend further encouraged the bond between Ruchiraketu and I.

We both went on the first of the three month Ordination retreats in Tuscany, Italy. We spent a great deal of time together there. Ruchiraketu is a 'natural' meditator, if one can use such a term. On a long retreat he came into his own, appeared softer, deeper, wiser. Or maybe I just had more time to notice. We went on long walks and explored the countryside, the Dharma, each other. Any fear that the lack of a business to discuss might remove our principal common ground proved unfounded. We had become friends.

At the end of that retreat we Went for Refuge – along with 18 others – the link we felt with each other, and with Ratnaketu, being strengthened by our both becoming



Vajraketu (L) Ratnaketu (R) and Ruchiraketu (sitting) back in the FBS days

ing 'Ketu's'. A *ketu* is a comet, *Ruchira* means beautiful, *Vajra* means diamond. So the Beautiful and the Diamond Comet were born.

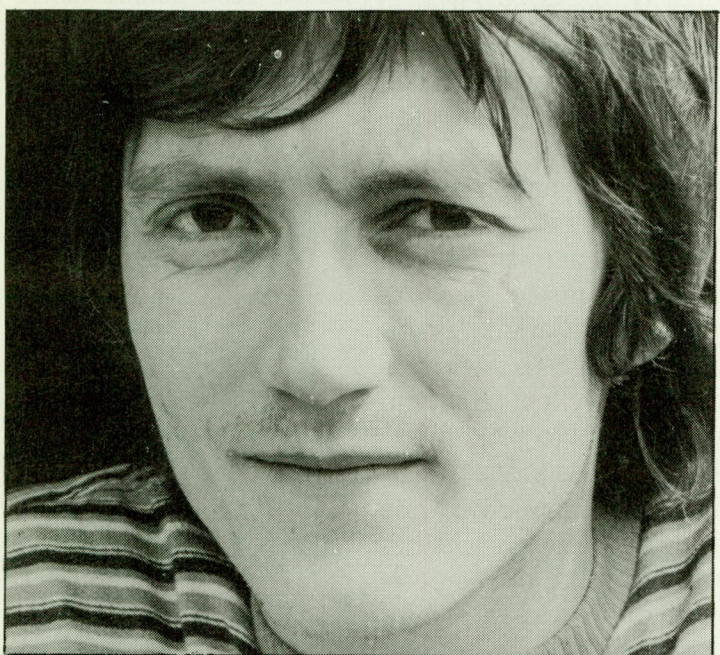
After Tuscany I went to India. Despite more or less agreeing that the three of us would do something together, I had, in rather headstrong fashion several months previously, committed myself to going to work in India without consulting the others. Ruchiraketu had taken me for a walk and told me off. I felt a bit guilty but mainly I thought he was being boring, failing to see what a tremendous challenge it represented for me. Despite two years of close daily contact, we still saw things from different angles. So I went; Ruchiraketu and Ratnaketu came to the airport to see me off.

I was in India for two and a

half years. The first six months or so were very difficult. I felt very lost and lonely. I wrote to a number of people, including Ruchiraketu. He didn't write back. I was hurt and angry and sent him an indignant, resentful letter. In fact one from him arrived a few days after I had posted it, so I felt a bit bad and sent him an apology. We didn't correspond much after that, but he did send me a taped letter from Vajraloka, the retreat centre where he had moved to get more fully absorbed in his meditation practice. He explained on the tape how he was not good at writing letters, but that he had taken up the *Tara* visualisation practice, which is the meditation practice I was given at the time of my Ordination, and that he was dedicating it to me every day – in lieu of writing to me. I was touched.



Vajraketu



Ruchiraketu

I listened to the tape lying under a fan in our Bombay Centre, where I worked for the final 18 months of my stay in India. Hearing Ruchiraketu's voice (soft and Irish) and listening to him talk about meditation and Vajraloka, I determined to fit in a retreat there on my forthcoming visit to England. Late in July last year I went for ten days.

We got on spectacularly well right from the start, sharing a room, going for a long walk each afternoon, discussing what we had been doing, what we hoped to do. The remarkable thing was that the bond between us had definitely strengthened during the time we had been apart, even though we had not been in much direct communication. Since Ordination we had been leading apparently quite different lives – he a full time meditator, me

teaching and running a busy Centre – but we had both been fairly wholehearted about it. We had both changed, deepened even, so there was more within each of us to engage in the friendship. During the course of our many talks we decided that when I returned to India he would come with me. The retreat culminated in a triumphant ascent of Mt Snowdon, a peak climbed thousands of times before, but seldom by a happier more talkative pair.

Those ten days were a definite watershed, as though past actions were ripening – the work we had done, the meals we had eaten, the walks we had shared, even the bond of a common name, all leading us almost unawares to the sort of friendship that, outside of the Spiritual Community, one seldom finds. When visa complications delayed our return to India

we wanted to stay together so I moved up to Wales and joined Ruchiraketu on retreat, where we have been for the past nine months.

For the whole of that time we have been sharing a room. Sharing a room is a very good way of getting to know someone. If nothing else it throws you much more together, and, at least in our case, it ensures daily contact. Hardly a day goes by without our discussing it in detail – how we have been, how our meditations went, what our particular distractions were, what we have felt, or thought, or read... Nothing is left out. Much is made in Buddhism of the spiritual significance of confession, and indeed Ruchiraketu and I do sometimes confess things to each other; but of almost equal value, at least to me, is the opportunity of sharing the thousand and one thoughts and feelings that go to make up an ordinary day, that in a sense go to make up what one is. It is wonderful to be able to tell someone how out of proportion this or that petty thing has become, how this or that doubt is bothering me, or to speak of the ambitions and desires, noble and ignoble, that are on my mind, of the fantasies that will not go away – nothing in itself of any great significance, too small to bother people who are not really interested in you, yet important enough to mean that being able to express them, to have someone listen, hear and understand, leads to a feeling of relief, content, like the satisfaction one feels after cleaning up an untidy room.

I do not mean by this that we spend hours sorting out each other's problems. We do sometimes help each other to sort out problems, sometimes seeking advice, sometimes just using the other as a sounding board to bounce ideas off, since objectifying something often enables one to clarify one's thinking. But far more it is just a sharing of the content of our daily consciousness, its highs and lows, purity and murkiness, clarity and confusion, the very act of which brings us even closer together, as well as helping us extend our awareness of the processes of our own minds.

Obviously there are times when we are more in contact than at others, but one of the luxuries of being on retreat is the extra sensitivity, and time available to notice and correct, and one or other of us will act quickly to re-establish contact if it slips. Usually it is enough just to make a little

extra effort to have a good chat, perhaps ask the other about something we suspect might be bothering them. Not since the days of FBS have we actually had rows, and even in those days we generally managed to contain it within the confines of the particular issue and not allow it to spill over into our overall communication.

Neither of us is afraid to interfere with the other's life, in big or small ways, or to express opinions which may or may not be acted upon. Through our years in the FWBO we have learned the art of giving and receiving criticism, so although we do quite often pull each other up, it does not lead to any bad feeling. For my part, I greatly value the criticism I receive from Ruchiraketu as it nearly always represents sound judgement, and contains something from which I can learn. If the spiritual life is about the development of awareness, then a close friend can do much to help one extend one's awareness of oneself through criticism and comment.

Of course the friendship is not perfect, but I am well satisfied with the way it is going. It is moving forward, getting better all the time. Such disappointments as I have mostly revolve around my own holding back. It is hard for me, even with such a friendship, to express very much real unselfishness within it. There are times when I can give myself freely, but there are others when I experience a feeling of having surrendered a certain amount of independence. I don't always like having to take Ruchiraketu into account, but I tell him that and he doesn't seem to mind. Quite often I find it is just my problem, as he is not placing on me the demands I imagine. But I should still like to be more forthcoming with my affections, more generous in my interest, more wholehearted in my commitment to him, to be able to cry, with Walt Whitman,

"I have stores plenty and to spare,
And anything I have I bestow."

At one point, as I was writing this article, I ran out of ideas so I went and asked Ruchiraketu why he likes me. He thought for a few moments and replied, 'You are easy to be with. We have fun.' – Which of course we do. The spiritual life is fun, most of the time, and what makes it fun is having friends to share in the adventure. Ruchiraketu and I laugh a lot together. But how do you write three thousand words about that?

It was not surprising that Lama Govinda and Li Gotami should now be coming to Kalimpong to spend a few days with me and not surprising that I should be more than happy to submit to a trifling inconvenience in order to be able to accommodate them. From the contact that Lama Govinda and I had already had with each other I already felt that we were kindred spirits, and that our forthcoming meeting would be a meeting not of bodies only but of hearts and minds. Small wonder, then, that the editorial I wrote for the September *Stepping-Stones* should have been entitled 'The Good Friend', or that I should have spent the greater part of the month in eager anticipation of the moment when, on looking out of the window, I at last saw the picturesque figures of the German-born lama and his Indian wife alighting from the landrover and making their way up the path to the gate of 'The Hermitage'.*

Lama Govinda was at that time a little over fifty. In appearance he was of medium height, and his very slight corpulence was virtually concealed by the brown *chuba* that fell in loose folds to his feet, on which he wore Indian-style sandals. The *chuba* was made not of the usual heavy woolen cloth but of some light material more suited to the Indian climate. Over one shoulder he wore a bag of the type carried by South-east Asian Buddhist monks, while round his neck there hung a Tibetan rosary with the usual attachments. His costume was completed by a kind of stole which he wore over the rosary and which hung down on either side almost to the hem of his *chuba*. Being a married lama he was not shaven-headed, and his light brown hair was brushed straight back from a forehead of unusual loftiness and intellectuality. His forehead was, in fact, the dominating feature of his face, contrasting strongly with his rather full lips and weak, receding chin. In manner he was mild and conciliatory in the extreme and, as I soon discovered, courteous almost to the point of ceremoniousness, with an air of distinction as though he had always moved in good society. Only the subtlety of the smile that played about his lips, and the keenness of the glance that occasionally shot from his deep-set eyes, gave one any extent of the life – and the fire – that lurked within.

* The Venerable Sangharakshita's residence from 1951-53

KINDRED SPIRITS

by SANGHARAKSHITA

In our last issue of the Newsletter (Spring 1985), we sadly announced the death, on 14th January 1985, of Lama Govinda. Founder of the Arya Maitreya Mandala, a Buddhist Order which has branches in many countries in the West, author of such well-known books as *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism* and *Way of the White Clouds*, painter and poet, Lama Govinda was a leading figure in the development of Buddhism in the West. As such we remember him with gratitude and respect. From disciples of the Venerable Sangharakshita Lama Govinda also claims a special affection, for the two men recognised each other as kindred spirits from their first contact. In his last letter to Lama Govinda (published in the previous issue of the *Newsletter*), the Venerable Sangharakshita wrote, 'You are well aware, I am sure, that when in India I did not feel spiritually and intellectually (and culturally!) closer to anyone than I did to you...'

The Venerable Sangharakshita found himself writing about his initial meeting with Lama Govinda within days of hearing of his death. This year he has resumed writing on his second volume of memoirs which covers the first few years of his stay in Kalimpong, on the Indo-Tibetan border, from the point at which the previous volume, *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus*, leaves off. It is during this period that Lama Govinda and his wife, Li Gotami, came to Kalimpong to stay with him. Since Lama Govinda had been a regular contributor to *Stepping-Stones*, the Buddhist journal edited by Sangharakshita in Kalimpong, the two had been in correspondence for more than a year and had already begun to discover the extent to which they were in sympathy with one another. Their meeting was therefore of great importance to them both. There could be no more fitting memorial to Lama Govinda in this Newsletter than to quote extracts from the chapter of his memoirs in which the Venerable Sangharakshita tells of that momentous encounter.

A further curious coincidence finds us publishing this piece in an issue of the *Newsletter* devoted to the theme of friendship, for we are privileged here to witness the coming together of two kindred spirits united in spiritual fellowship....

Li Gotami was about twenty years younger than Lama Govinda, as well as shorter and plumper. Apart from the fact that her *chuba* was sleeveless (she wore a long-sleeved blouse underneath), she was clad in much the same hybrid but artistic costume as her distinguished husband. Though her dark hair was bobbed in Western style, she had the creamy complexion, the prominent nose, and the large black eyes that, at a later date, I came to recognise as typical of the Parsi stock from which she sprang. Besides being extremely vivacious, she was sociable and talkative, and possessed a clear, ringing laugh that was very infectious.

When one has looked forward to meeting two people as much as I had been looking forward to meeting Lama Govinda and Li Gotami – and as they, apparently, had been looking forward to meeting me – there is always the possibility of mutual disappointment. In the event, this was far from being the case. Within half an hour of their arrival at 'The Hermitage' a definite rapport had been established between us and we were talking as freely as though we had known each other for years. As might have been expected, I felt a greater rapport with Lama Govinda that I did with Li Gotami, who in any case had only a fraction of the wisdom and insight that was manifest in almost every word that Lama Govinda spoke. Nevertheless, I appreciated Li Gotami for her liveliness and intelligence, as well as for her delightful outspokenness, which at times bordered on the outrageous. Though her religious affiliations were by no means exclusively Buddhist, she knew enough about Buddhism to be able to take a serious interest in the subject and there was, therefore, no question of her being excluded from the lengthy discussions in which Lama Govinda and I soon became involved.

What these discussions were about it would be difficult to say. It was as though in the course of the five days that my two guests spent with me in Kalimpong, as well as the seven days that I spent with them in Ghoom immediately afterwards, Lama Govinda and I ranged over practically the whole field of Buddhist thought and practice. On whatever topic we happened to touch, we found ourselves in agreement to an extent that would have been surprising had we not been familiar with each other's writings and had we not already exchanged



With Lama Govinda in Kalimpong, 1951

ideas in a number of letters. Indeed, as the cloudless Autumn days went by, my feeling that we were kindred spirits received more abundant confirmation than I had dared to hope, and I was left in no doubt whatever that despite the fact that he was a married lama and I was a celibate monk I had more in common with Lama Govinda than with any other Buddhist I had ever met.

One of the most important topics on which we touched, and in fact touched more than once, was that of the relation between Buddhism and the spiritual life, on the one hand, and literature and the fine arts, on the other. Besides being a Buddhist by conviction, Lama Govinda was himself an artist and poet of no small repute. He had held exhibitions of his paintings in a number of major Indian cities, and had brought out two small volumes of poetry in his native German. For my part, I had written poetry since the age of eleven or twelve, and was even now thinking of putting together some of my more recent poems for publication in book form. A few of these poems had already appeared in the pages of 'The Illustrated Weekly of India',

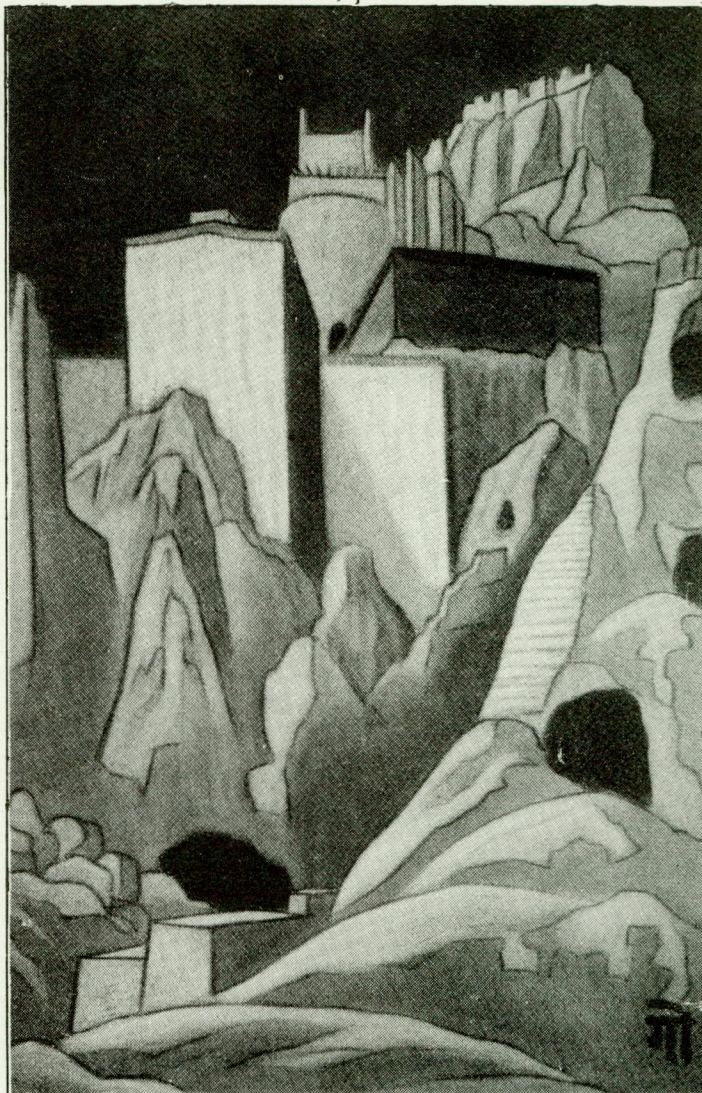
which had financed Lama Govinda's expedition to Tsaparang in Western Tibet and afterwards serialized his account of his experiences, and from the nature of these poems he was well aware that I was no more indifferent to the claims of Beauty than I was to those of Truth or Goodness.

The fact that Lama Govinda and I cultivated literature and the fine arts did not, however, mean that he painted pictures or that I wrote poems in addition to doing such specifically Buddhist things as observing the precepts, meditating, studying the Dharma, and giving lectures. For him as for me the painting of pictures and the writing of poems was an integral part of the spiritual life itself. The relation between Buddhism and the spiritual life, on the one hand, and literature and the fine arts, on the other, was not, therefore, one that was merely external, as between different material objects. On the contrary, there was a deep inner connection between them. For this reason there could be no question of the cultivation of literature and the fine arts being inconsistent with the practice of Buddhism and the living of the spiritual life, as I had for a time supposed (or had been led to sup-

pose), much less still of the one being actually inimical to the other. Thanks largely to his intimate acquaintance with Tibetan Buddhist art in all its forms, Lama Govinda's understanding of this important truth was at that time much clearer and more explicit than my own. In particular he had a deep appreciation of the relation between art and meditation. 'Art and meditation are creative states of the human mind,' he had written in a little book on the subject that he afterwards gave me, 'both are nourished by the same source, but it may seem that they are moving in different directions: art towards the realm of sense-impressions, meditation towards the overcoming of forms and sense-impressions. But the difference pertains only to accidentals, not to the essentials...'

But though much of the time that Lama Govinda and Li Gotami spent with me in Kalimpong was passed in discussion, we did not spend all of it in this way. Even before their arrival I had,

with their consent, arranged a number of engagements for them. Thus it was that on the second day of their stay Lama Govinda gave a talk on his journey to Tsaparang, a journey that had taken place four years earlier and on which he had been accompanied by Li Gotami. Though I had read about this journey in the articles he had written for 'The Illustrated Weekly of India', and though I was to read the more detailed account that appeared in *The Way of the White Clouds* fifteen years later, it was the story of the Tsaparang Expedition as I heard it from Lama Govinda's own lips that left the most vivid impression on my mind. This impression was heightened by the fact that Lama Govinda illustrated his talk by showing a number of his own paintings and sketches, many of which he had executed on the spot. Quite a high proportion of them depicted massive, cubiform fortresses or monasteries in a setting—or against a background—of still more massive and hardly less cubiform mountains. Fortresses,



Temples of Tsaparang by Lama Govinda

monasteries and mountains, together with the occasional *chor-ten*, indeed seemed to be the artist's favourite subjects, and ones to which his simple, monumental style was well adapted. At the conclusion of the talk, which took place at 'The Hermitage', a tea party in honour of Lama Govinda and Li Gotami was given for all Y.M.B.A.* members, and Sachin and another musically inclined young Nepali entertained the gathering with their songs...

Lama Govinda and Li Gotami had clearly enjoyed their contact with me, as well as their contact with the members and friends of the Kalimpong Y.M.B.A., who for their part felt very much encouraged by the friendly and sympathetic interest that the two distinguished visitors had taken in our activities. Both Lama Govinda and Li Gotami were by nature extremely warm-hearted, and the simple, unpretentious way in which they behaved made it easy for them to get on well with young people and win their confidence. For my part, I had enjoyed my contact with them even more, perhaps, than they had enjoyed their contact with me and was already looking forward to accompanying them to Ghoom, where they had invited me to spend a week with them at the bungalow in which Lama Govinda had lived before the war with his German foster-mother.

The Pines', as the bungalow was called, was small and dark, and set among pine trees the foliage of which was inky black rather than dark green. There was mist everywhere. The name Ghoom was indeed said to mean mist or fog, and it was well known that however clear a day it might be down at Teesta Bridge, or in Darjeeling, on passing through Ghoom one would be sure to encounter anything from a thick blanket of white cloud through which the grey-blue shapes of the pines loomed like the shadows of giants to a veil of mist so fine as to be almost invisible. Surrounded by mist as it was, 'The Pines' was naturally both cold and damp, especially as the place had not been lived in for a while, and the three of us spent much of our time huddled round the tiny charcoal fire trying to keep warm. We also spent much of our time talking,

and in the greater silence and isolation of Ghoom the rapport that had been established between us in Kalimpong was considerably deepened. One morning, however, when the weather was brighter than usual, we paid a visit to the famous Ghoom Monastery, which was only a short distance away. This monastery occupied an important place in Lama Govinda's spiritual history, for it was here that he had met his guru who, as I knew from the articles that had appeared in 'The Illustrated Weekly of India', was Tomo Geshe Rimpoche. The monastery also occupied a place in my own spiritual history, though not nearly so important as one as in the case of Lama Govinda. I had been to see it six years earlier, on the occasion of my first visit to Darjeeling, and had vivid recollections of the golden face of the colossal seated image of Maitreya, the Coming Buddha, looking down at me through the gloom. Now I was happy to be able to visit the monastery – or rather, the monastery temple – with Lama Govinda and Li Gotami.

As we lifted the heavy felt curtain that screened the entrance I saw the same colossal figure seated there in the semi-darkness, the same golden face glimmering beneath the great jewelled tiara. Smaller figures gleamed from behind the glass doors of showcases and glowed with a subdued richness from the frescoed walls like reflections seen in deep water. Rosary in hand, Lama Govinda and Li Gotami moved clockwise round the chamber, pausing for a moment in front of each image or *thangka* and reciting the appropriate mantra, and I followed in their wake. Some of the mantras were new to me, and of these two in particular – the mantra of Shakyamuni and the mantra of Padmasambhava – not only sounded strangely familiar but also set up reverberations that made themselves felt in the remotest corners of my being. The whole experience affected me deeply. There was the rectangular chamber itself, dimly lit from above by the light that filtered in at a kind of skylight, there was the brooding presence of the images, with the colossal Maitreya silently dominating the rest, and there was the sound of the mantras as the two dark figures in *chubas* made their way with bowed heads round the chamber. What affected me most deeply, however, was the evident devotion with which Lama Govinda and Li Gotami recited the

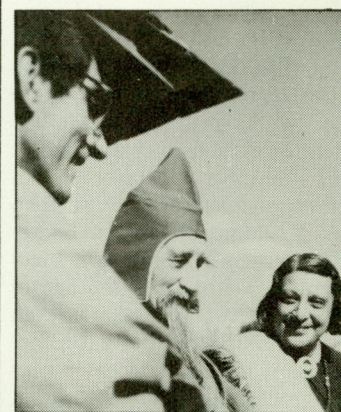
mantras and the way in which they seemed to feel, behind each image, the living spiritual presence of which the image was the representation or, indeed, even the veritable embodiment.

It was therefore only natural, perhaps, that of all the discussions Lama Govinda and I had in Kalimpong and Ghoom the only one to leave a distinct and separate impression on my mind should have taken place after our visit to the Ghoom Monastery and should have related to meditation and, in particular, to meditation on the different Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. While I listened enthralled, Lama Govinda explained how one took up first one kind of spiritual practice, then another, in accordance with the various needs of one's developing spiritual life. It was not, however, that on taking up a new practice one discarded the old practice and put it behind one, so to speak. What one did was to add the new practice to the old and incorporate both in a higher unity. In this way one's meditation or spiritual practice would, over the years, gradually become an ever richer and more complex thing. As Lama Govinda spoke, I had a vision of petal being added to petal, or facet to facet, until one had a thousand-petalled rose or a thousand-faceted crystal ball complete in all its glory. What Lama Govinda was doing, of course, was speaking of meditation or spiritual practice – indeed, of the spiritual life itself – in terms of the gradual building up of a mandala. In other words, he was speaking of it not only in terms of time but in terms of space. Hitherto I had thought of it as a progression from stage to stage, or level to level. Now I also saw it as an unfolding from an ever more truly central point into an ever increasing number of different aspects and dimensions....

Shortly before I left, Lama Govinda presented me with a standing image of the Buddha. It was about a foot and a half in height, and though the rather flat wooden body was carved and painted with a simplicity which was almost primitive, the gilded face, hands and feet, which were of clay, were of unusual delicacy and refinement. The image was not unfamiliar to me. It featured in a painting by Li Gotami depicting Lama Govinda 'in his hermitage at Ghoom' that had been reproduced in 'The Illustrated Weekly of India'. In this painting Lama Govinda was shown sitting cross-legged at a kind of lectern in

front of a small window, pen in hand, and surrounded by books and *thangkas* and various souvenirs of his travels. The image stood in the right hand corner, next to the shrine. It had been carved in Darjeeling, Lama Govinda told me, by an old Tibetan monk he had known many years ago. Though he was very fond of the image, he had decided not to take it to Bombay, since one finger was already broken and he feared that in the course of the long train journey further damage would be done. He was therefore happy to give it to me. He was also happy to give me some fifteen or twenty volumes of Pali texts and translations which he no longer needed. A number of these volumes bore the signatures of Earl Brewster, the American Buddhist, whom he had known in Capri (and, I think, in Ceylon). Earl Brewster, in his turn, had known D.H. Lawrence, and it was with Brewster and his wife Achsah that Lawrence had stayed in Ceylon on his way to Australia. It seemed strange that through the grey-covered Pali Text Society volumes I should be in contact with someone who had been a personal friend of the author of *The Rainbow* which I had read when I was sixteen or seventeen and which had on me the effect of an emotional revelation.

On my arrival at 'The Hermitage' I installed the standing image of the Buddha in the octagonal shrine room and added the volumes of Pali texts and translations to my small but steadily growing collection of books. Both the red and gold image and the grey-covered volumes would be a constant reminder of the twelve memorable days that two – and at times three – kindred spirits had spent together.



Sangharakshita with Lama Govinda and Li Gotami in 1966

* The 'Young Men's Buddhist Association', an organisation established by the Venerable Sangharakshita in Kalimpong in 1952.

BRITAIN

LBC

After the retreat at Battle last winter we decided to hold a weekend follow-up event at the LBC to introduce those who had been on it to the possibilities for following through their experiences on the retreat. The weekend proved valuable and will be repeated after future retreats. Many of those who attended have made strong connections with the LBC and are now well and truly involved in various aspects of the LBC 'mandala'.

This session's theme is 'The Noble Eightfold Path', coinciding with the completion of the Mitrata series. This particular theme has generated noticeable enthusiasm, with a series of good talks at the Tuesday Friends' class, followed by periodic discussion groups, both of which have been well attended to date. Also programmed are three weekend study events on the same theme.

Cittapala and a team of Order members, mitras, and friends have been running courses for both beginners and Friends in the West End. Numbers attending are small at present, but we are optimistic that they will build up.

So far this year we have celebrated Parinirvana Day, FWBO Day, and Wesak. Our recent policy of holding festivals on the nearest Sunday is working well, since attendances at the first two were throughout the day consistently greater than at previous festivals. For Wesak we joined the Croydon and West London Centres at Conway Hall in Holborn for the first of what we hope will become an annual London-wide event. (See separate report)

Some changes are taking place at Windhorse Trading, who are instituting major changes in their organisation (effective next year) so that mitras working in the business will have systematic preparation for Ordination, which will include substantial periods of full-time study. Friends Foods is in the process of setting up a community for men working in the business, which will provide an improved situation for those mitras and Order members alike.

The three year study course is going well, with new groups scheduled to start in the autumn, due to increasing interest and demand.

LBC BOOKSHOP

Should you have the opportunity to visit the LBC you will be able to browse in the rapidly expanding Buddhist bookshop now established there. Just recently, the Venerable Sangharakshita has been compiling a new list of recommended books which has been divided into two categories: those suitable for comparative beginners and those suitable for more serious students of Buddhism. We already have a large selection of these books.

Should you be unable to visit the LBC in person it is possible to order books by mail. If you would like to be put on the mailing list for our current catalogue, please write to the LBC bookshop enclosing a stamped & addressed envelope.



CENTRES COME TOGETHER TO CELEBRATE

At a meeting of all the chairmen of all FWBO centres held late last year the idea was put forward of holding a movement-wide festival. This would involve as many people as possible who were connected with each centre, and would enable them to come together in one place and celebrate.

The ideal occasion for this celebration would be Wesak - the anniversary of the Buddha's Enlightenment. Traditionally, in the Buddhist world, Wesak is the major Buddhist festival, and it recognises the event from which Buddhism sprang: a human being reaching the state of perfect freedom.

Rather than trying to hold this festival immediately, the suggestion was made that it should be tried on a smaller scale this year. The three London centres were asked to initiate this event.

Some months later, on Bank Holiday Monday 6th May, the day arrived. At 11 a.m. people from the three centres began to arrive at the Conway Hall in central London. For Wesak, the hall had been totally transformed.

As people walked in the first thing they were faced with was a beautiful shrine dedicated to Sakyamuni which filled the entire stage and arch area of the main hall. It was over twenty feet high and thirty feet wide, and had been constructed of rolls of cloth in yellow, blue and white. The centrepiece was a rupa which Chintamani had remodelled and repainted specially for the day. Upon the shrine was an

abundance of blossom. What many people did not know was that the main part of this massive shrine was on wheels so that it could be moved for the different events during the day.

The day officially began with an introduction given by Kulamitra, chairman of the London Buddhist Centre, in which he pointed out the significance of Wesak. This was followed by a meditation and puja led by Ratnavira, chairman of the West London centre. On leaving the puja everybody was greeted by a wonderful display of food provided by 'The Cherry Orchard'. Most people chose to have their lunch out in Red Lion Square, which is directly outside, and the whole square filled up with Buddhists, heightening the sense of celebration. This was aided by glorious sunshine which was virtually uninterrupted throughout the day. Over lunch friends from different centres had the chance to get together. The square had the feel of some of the large events which I had experienced before only under fairly intensive retreat conditions. Local people passing through had probably never seen so many people in the square really enjoying themselves.

After lunch most people returned to the main hall for a recital of songs by Britten, Bliss and Howells, which included musical renditions of poems by Walter de la Mare and W.H. Auden. This was given by two professional musicians - Julius Drake, piano, and Katherine

Pierrard, soprano. This was very well received and afterwards the performers commented on how attentive and responsive the audience had been. It was something they had never experienced so intensely before.

After this it was back to the square for high tea, this time provided by 'Hockneys' restaurant.

Kulamitra then introduced two excellent talks, one given by Subhuti entitled 'The Ten Powers' and the other by Padma-vajra entitled 'A Public Case'. Both speakers are highly acclaimed in the movement and they lived up to their reputations as speakers.

The day concluded with a celebratory puja led by Dhammarati, which included the seven traditional offerings and three readings. After the puja some people sat on for almost half an hour. This was a fitting reminder of what Wesak was all about.

Wesak was over and as everybody left for their own Centres there was a strong sense of the co-operation which had been present between the three centres concerned, and it certainly sowed many seeds for future large-scale events.

The whole day ran very smoothly, which seemed to surprise even the organisers! Well over two hundred people attended for most of the day and it had certainly been a successful 'trial run' of what could well be a truly spectacular movement-wide celebration of the Three Jewels in future.

CROYDON

With the launching of the 'Festival of Friendship' the Arts Centre stands poised for what promises to be its most successful season yet. Programmes and posters for the festival, and also for the present Buddhist Centre season, have been distributed over most of South London and Surrey, as well as to many individuals and organisations all over the country, in what has been our biggest publicity drive to date.

The opening event of the festival, the film 'A Time There Was ... a Portrait of Benjamin Britten', contained an excellent portrayal of friendship in the life of the composer Benjamin Britten. The first showing was introduced by the film's director Tony Palmer.

The festival continued with a full house for Stephen Macdonald's highly acclaimed play 'Not About Heroes'. The play was first staged at the Arts Centre in last year's Non-violence season, and this year's production celebrated the 40th anniversary of the ending of the Second World War.

'Not About Heroes' portrays the friendship between the First World War poets Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, and shows how under Sassoon's guidance the younger poet's genius gradually flowered.

The festival has not been without its disappointments. The South London Tippet Festival, news of which was reported in the last Facets article, has had to be postponed due to organisational

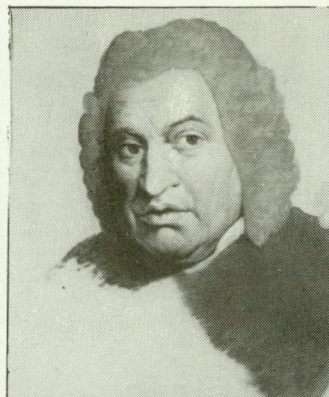
difficulties beyond our control.

The opening lecture of the season also had to be postponed owing to the speaker, Stuart Miller, being ill. Mr Miller was to have spoken on the subject of his book, *Men and Friendship*, and judging by the bookings and the number of people who came hoping to hear the lecture, it would have been a capacity audience. We are hoping however that Mr Miller will give his lecture later in the festival.

Other events in the festival include a film season, with films such as 'From Mao to Mozart', 'A Tale of Two Cities', and 'Death in Venice'; readings from Christopher Hampton's play 'Total Eclipse' about the relationship between the French poets Verlaine and Rimbaud (Mr Hampton will also be lecturing on these two poets during the festival), an exhibition of water colours by the contemporary English painter Patrick Proctor, and a series of free lectures on friendship in the lives of various Western artists. These lectures include 'Samuel Johnson and Friendship' by Johnson's biographer John Wain, 'The Romantics in Kanadu' given by Richard Holmes, author of *Shelley: The Pursuit* and 'Bloodbrotherhood: Male Friendship in the Life and Work of D.H. Lawrence' by Lawrence's biographer Dr Keith Sagar. Dr Sagar will also be launching his new book *D.H. Lawrence: Life Into Art*.

We hope to use the Festival of Friendship to cultivate further our links with local schools, and to become generally better known in the local community, from which there has already been a very encouraging response. We are hoping that

through the Arts Centre we will be able to reach a much wider range of people than is possible through the Buddhist Centre alone.



Samuel Johnson

The Buddhist Centre itself is at present going through a very successful period. Lectures on Buddhism are being given to capacity audiences, the beginners meditation classes are very full and, importantly, the intermediate class is also very full, with many new people attending.

Events in the Buddhist Centre this summer include several day-retreats, a Buddhism seminar and Buddhism course, and two series of public talks: one at the centre itself: *Three Buddhist Lives*, and the other, *Aspects of Western Buddhism*, at the nearby Nettlefold Hall.

Meanwhile, work continues at the old rectory in Sussex which we bought earlier this year. Members of the building team have been living there since March, and are engaged in full-scale redecoration of the house as well as rewiring and installing central heating. With two members of the team going on the Tuscany Ordination retreat this year (as well as another three from Aryatara) the completion date for the project is now December, in time for the Aryatara Christmas retreat, which we hope to hold there.

When it is finished, the house will have been decorated and furnished to a very high standard. In early May the first event, a Southern Region Order weekend, was held at the house. Provisional plans for future events include arts-based residential courses and seminars, as well as retreats and courses centred on the Dharma.

The long-term prospects for the house are exciting, with many possibilities open to us for developing the situation and for involving people with the Dharma.

WEST LONDON

The Baker Street Buddhist Centre is drawing to its end, and FWBO West London is moving to 7 Colville Houses, London W11. This new property is situated very near the world famous Portobello Road. It has been a very worthwhile three years in the Baker Street premises, but we are outgrowing it. The place we are moving to is not much larger, but the space is distributed better and this move is not permanent. We are going to be planning and working towards a larger Centre, but 7 Colville Houses will provide us with premises to keep our activities thriving until we have found what we are looking for.

We are moving from 24 Baker Street on 10th July 1985. This has given us two full months this session. As with last

session the Italian Renaissance is finding its way into our Centre's activities. Ratnabodhi is dedicating an evening to Leonardo da Vinci, and Ratnavira is dedicating an evening to Titian.

Massage is also doing well, and recently there has been an article in *Weightwatchers* magazine about Eve Gill, who teaches massage in our Centre. This has generated interest and boosted the courses.

Finally, we are using the theme of the Dharma jewel for our regulars' class this session, using the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path, and some Pali texts. Dharma Day is celebrated on July 4th, and July 11th is our final evening at Baker Street.

BRISTOL

FWBO Bristol is expanding on several fronts. We have recently added an 'intermediate' evening to our weekly classes at the Centre. This means we are now able to give people the opportunity to pursue their interest in Buddhism much more systematically: from beginners' course, to intermediate class, to regulars' class, to mitra activities.

The community has also expanded, Anandajyoti having moved in after many years at the West London centre - a very welcome addition to our ranks.

Whilst we have been running men's activities here for some time, until recently we have been unable to provide similar opportunities for women. However, a woman Friend with a suitably large shrine-room of her own has successfully organised a women's day-retreat which ten women attended. A further event is planned, and we hope that before long it may be possible for a woman Order member to come to Bristol regularly to lead women's activities.

Finally, in the festive puja at our recent Wesak celebrations, three men, all members of Sudurjaya community, became mitras - an auspicious culmination to the most auspicious of festival days.

NORWICH

Perhaps a good place to begin these notes is with Friends Night, the recently renamed Tuesday class which has been very much living up to its name. The theme of Friendship proved a popular one, and the class is thriving now more than at any time since the old format of double meditation and puja was changed nearly two years ago. The evening does always close with a puja, but to supplement the meditation there have been some excellent talks, study sessions and discussions; and it has been very encouraging to see new faces coming to the class. It is hoped that the theme for the summer 'The Noble Eightfold Path' will be just as stimulating.

It was also good to see some new friends at the recent Buddha's Birthday celebration when everyone much enjoyed listening to Buddhadasa, and stared rather enviously at the sunshine and blue skies of New Zealand depicted in his slides. Parinirvana Day in February saw the shrine room packed out for the evening's celebration; and as I write, Wesak is on the horizon, and a day of meditation and readings is planned, followed by an elaborate festive puja.

Other activities continue as before. The Wednesday beginners' class is well attended, as was

London Buddhist Centre BOOKSHOP

For a quality selection of Buddhist books, recommended by Ven. Sangharakshita for both beginners and more serious students.



Over 150 titles!
Pali Canon translations
Mahayana Texts
Zen Buddhism
Tibetan Buddhism
History of Buddhism
Abhidharma
Philosophy of Buddhism
Buddhist Biographies

Mail-order service available.

Telephone enquiries available.

For complete catalogue send SAE (large) to L.B.C. Bookshop, 51 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 0HU or call 01-981 1225.

the recent Dharma course. Numbers at the university sessions are disappointing, but it does seem very important to persevere.

If only one could convince people that time given to meditation will help ones performance in finals, not detract from it! What one might call fringe activities are doing well, and the Yoga studio at Queens Road is busy with Yoga, T'ai Chi and massage. The centre was represented at the Association of Therapy and Healing's recent Health & Fitness Day where our 'Meditation & Massage stall' and workshops attracted a lot of interest. The Yoga studio is also the workshop for Rainbow Cushions, the quality of whose work has resulted in a good year with several large orders.

Finally, on April 20th, Abhaya led a naming ceremony at the centre, and Benedict, the nine-week-old son of Alison O'Brien and Advayacitta, gained, most appropriately, the additional name Ruciraghosa: 'Brilliant Voice'.

PEACE WEEK

The first two weeks of March saw the culmination of several months of work by a group of people in Norwich, and the staging of a 'Festival of Nonviolence'. There was a full programme of events over two weeks that included an opening fair where over thirty groups set up stalls, workshops, public talks, a children's day, films, poetry, jazz, theatre, a ceilidh, and a street collection which raised £420 for famine relief in Ethiopia. There was also a day of fasting, meditation, silence and readings during which a number of those fasting raised a further £500 in sponsorship. The FWBO's contribution to the festival included public talks by Subhuti on 'The Quality of Life' and by Saddhaloka on peace in the individual and the world. Ratnaprabha spoke alongside peace activists at a public meeting chaired by the Lord Mayor of Norwich.

People from various backgrounds came together to organise the festival, including two members of the Western Buddhist Order, Saddhaloka and Kevala.

The aims of the festival, as set out in an introductory leaflet, were:

- "to provide an opportunity for people to share and develop their thoughts and feelings about nonviolence,

- "to celebrate nonviolence and explore its potential for improving the quality of our lives,

- "to provoke many questions and stimulate each one of us to take nonviolence more seriously as a principle in our own lives,

- "to encourage people to withdraw their support from violent forces within society, and instead support and initiate alternatives."

The organisers aimed to encourage people to stage events under the auspices of the festival reflecting their concern with particular aspects or applications of the principle of nonviolence. Only a few events, such as the opening fair and the day of fasting, meditation and silence, were actually put on by the organisers themselves. In this way a very rich and varied festival was possible despite a severe lack of finance.

Doing something for the first time, there were inevitably mistakes and miscalculations, but overall the festival was a considerable success. Many people were surprised that such a festival could happen at all,

managing to break out of the area of ideas and good intentions into a substantial fortnight of activities.

What the festival has achieved it is impossible to measure. Seeds have been sown and it remains to be seen how they germinate and grow. Certainly one meets individuals who say that they are now sure that nonviolence is the way. It is clear that the festival played an important part in helping develop and strengthen a network of contacts and friendships between men and women concerned with the principle of nonviolence. Interest in the festival has been expressed by people outside Norwich and it seems there is a possibility of a festival of nonviolence in at least one other city. 1986 has been designated the United Nations 'Year of Peace', and it will certainly be a very good time to stage such activities.

PADMALOKA

As I sit here writing this article, the brilliant spring sunshine is streaming over Padmaloka, full of summer promise. And well it might do, for many changes are afoot here which are transforming the face of Padmaloka as a retreat centre. Firstly, a large part of the work for the Order Convention has now been completed with the building of a new large multi-purpose lounge and dormitory, and the construction and fitting out of a new shower block. These developments represent a landmark in Padmaloka's capacity to host large retreats, and enables us to accommodate up to sixty people in comfort.

Soon after the completion of the new lounge, we held our largest long retreat ever. This was the Ordination request retreat in March, which attracted some fifty mitras from all over the movement. Despite its size, the retreat ran very smoothly indeed under the organisation of Suvajra, and Vessantara, who led the retreat, thought it the best of such retreats so far. We hope to repeat this success later in the year by holding a further Ordination-request retreat for all those mitras who were not invited to this year's Ordination course in Tuscany.

The Open Spring Retreat, in April, was also very well attended, with some forty seven retreatants engaging in a very full and varied programme. For many of those attending, it was their first experience of the various advantages of a single-sex situation. There were many activities on offer: Yoga, T'ai Chi, and karate proving very popular. There were discussion groups and Question & Answer sessions featuring members of the large Order team. We were fortunate in having, as well as the Order team, several guest speakers from outside, who came to lend their insight and experience to the situation; and fortunate to have Surata himself leading the retreat in his own dynamic style.

The Padmaloka community, when not on retreat, still follow a full-time retreat programme which includes, as well as work periods, plenty of shrineroom activity and also study. The retreat programme here has just seen its first birthday and is continuing as successfully as ever. Padmaloka is rapidly developing into one of the best situations in the movement for mitras who have asked for Ordination, and we are pleased to be sending four of our number on this year's Tuscany course.

Now, with further work on the Convention preparations in

BUDDHISM: THE ETERNAL LEGACY

Tharpa Publications in association with the Office of the Western Buddhist Order invite you to attend an event at Friends House, Euston Road, London.

To celebrate the publication of

THE ETERNAL LEGACY: A GUIDE TO BUDDHIST CANONICAL LITERATURE

by the Ven. Maha Sthavira Sangharakshita

Thursday 29th August 1985, 6.00 — 9.00pm
when

The Ven. Sangharakshita
will give a talk and answer questions

Refreshments will be served
To cover expenses a charge of £1.00
will be made at the door

progress, we hope by the time July arrives to have completed all our new projects, and to have brought our existing facilities to a much higher standard than ever before.

ORDER OFFICE

Since returning from Tuscany in December 1984, the Venerable Sangharakshita has been immersed in literary work. His first task was to complete for publication the revision of a book on Buddhist texts which he wrote some twenty years ago. The work is now in press and will be released in August this year under the title *The Eternal Legacy: A Guide to Canonical Buddhist Literature*. Tharpa Publications, the publishers, are at the same time issuing a new edition of *A Survey of Buddhism*.

That work completed, the Venerable Sangharakshita again took up the writing of the second volume of his memoirs which begins where *The Thousand Petalled Lotus* ends, and covers the first period of his stay in Kalimpong. Originally commenced about seven years ago, laid aside, then taken up again four years ago, then laid aside for another three years, the work has continually had to defer to the Venerable Sangharakshita's other duties. He now feels that he must press ahead to completion, since his memories of that period of his life are beginning to lose their detail. Dealing as it does with events such as the first meeting with Lama Govinda, his contacts with Tibetan lamas, and the evolution of his own thinking, the work will be of great interest to all Friends.

The Venerable Sangha-

rakshita works a very full day. His memoirs occupy his mornings - and whatever other time he can give them. In the afternoons he deals with business and correspondence, and he receives people who have come to visit him. Though it is less and less easy for him to maintain personal communication with all or most of the growing numbers of people connected with the FWBO, he still keeps himself very much in touch, and is astonishingly well informed on all aspects of the movement. Chairmen are often surprised to find that he knows more about what is going on in their centres than they do! He receives letters from most Order members and from many mitras and friends from time to time, and minutes and reports from all areas of the FWBO are sent to him. Directly or through his secretariat he offers comment, guidance, criticism, and encouragement and he is still very much the principle inspiration of the FWBO. 'Official' contact between the Order and Buddhist groups, other religious bodies, and important institutions are the responsibility of the Order Office and most involve the Venerable Sangharakshita to some extent. As the FWBO grows in size and achievement, more and more people want to know about it and to meet its founder and head.

In the evenings the Venerable Sangharakshita usually deals with other literary work: editing lectures and seminar extracts for *Mitrata* or *Buddhayan*, writing a preface for his *Travel Letters* (to be published later this year by Windhorse Publications), and a message for the souvenir brochure of the opening of the first Bahujaan Mitay

educational hostel at Lohagoan in India which is run by the FWBO in Pune and sponsored by Aid For India, our British fund-raising charity. He has recently conducted a number of Question & Answer sessions for mitra-study-group leaders, one for men and one for women, on the Higher Evolution of Man and Aspects of The Higher Evolution of the Individual taped lecture series; for New Zealand Order members and mitras in Britain; and for men Order members on the subject of *The Order, Past & Present*. In this last session he dealt with such questions as how was the Order to be led after his death, and the possibility of having Anagarikas (Order members who have taken a vow of celibacy) in the West. He opened up a vision of the Order of the future - far more mature, adventurous, and living on a higher spiritual plane.

He has chaired two sets of symposia at Padmaloka Men's Events, always managing to say something uplifting, witty, and relevant under no more than the inspiration of the moment.

Most of the Venerable Sangharakshita's visitors have been from the FWBO but recently he received visits from three guests, each one quite different from the others. The Venerable Khemmadhammo, an English bhikkhu who trained in Thailand under Achaan Cha and who has established a vihara near Kenilworth in Warwickshire, has been in welcome contact with the FWBO for the past two years and has recently visited the Venerable Sangharakshita in connection with the establishment of a Buddhist prison chaplaincy, called 'Angulimala' after the famous mass-murderer-turned-Arahant of the Pali Suttas. The Venerable Khemmadhammo is trying to set up a network of Buddhist prison visitors to cover the growing number of prisoners who consider themselves Buddhists. He has asked the Venerable Sangharakshita to be a patron of this project, to which he has gladly agreed.

The Revd. David Clark, a Church of England industrial chaplain in Norwich, found out about the FWBO and the Venerable Sangharakshita through the Norwich Festival of Non-violence, which Order members were instrumental in setting up, and came to see the Venerable Sangharakshita at Padmaloka. The two had a wide-ranging discussion on matters of common spiritual concern. The Revd. Clark has invited the Venerable Sangharakshita to visit the Julian Shrine, the cell of the medieval anchorite and mystic, Mother Julian of Norwich, authoress of *Revelations of Divine Love*.

The Venerable Sangharakshita has also met an old friend after an interval of some years: Allen Ginsberg, the American 'beat' poet who was in London in connection with the publication of his collected poems. Mr Ginsberg visited the Venerable Sangharakshita at Sukhavati Community and the two talked for some time about poetry and about Buddhism in America, among other things. For those who remembered him in his more outre days, the embelazered and tied Allen Ginsberg of today came as something of a shock. He is a student of Trungpa Rinpoche, the Tibetan founder of the Vajradhatu Buddhist movement which is centred in the USA, and the Venerable Sangharakshita commented on the impression which he had gained from Vajradhatu literature that the beats and revolutionaries of yesteryear

who had joined Vajradhatu were settling into conventionality in their advancing old age! Mr Ginsberg protested that they still maintained their spontaneous minds despite their suits and seeming respectability.

When Mr Ginsberg expressed his admiration for the recently deceased Northumbrian poet, Basil Bunting, the Venerable Sangharakshita confessed that he scarcely thought him a poet at all since his work lacked any poetic fire and was excessively contrived and over-worked. Further discussion ensued on the respective merits of traditional poetic forms and the freer modern styles. Their first meeting had been in Kalimpong in the 1960's when Allen Ginsberg had come up to the Himalayan township to see the Venerable Sangharakshita and to meet Tibetan lamas. They have occasionally been able to meet since and evidently intend to remain in contact. It was a very friendly and interesting meeting, the highlight of which was a chanted rendition by Allen of William Blake's 'Tyger, Tyger' at the top of his slightly cracked voice to the drum-beat accompaniment of hand slapped on chest. We hope that he will visit us again and sing us more songs!

The Order Office welcomed Won Myung Sunim, a Korean Buddhist monk of the Chogyee Order, to the February Men's Event. Ven. Won Myung is very interested in the work of the FWBO since he sees that traditional Buddhism has been unable to reach people in the increasingly urbanised, industrial society of modern Korea which has, in consequence, the fastest growing Christian community in the world. He has now returned to Korea but intends to keep in touch with the FWBO.

In April the Venerable Sangharakshita took a one week break from his regular routine (which generally proceeds day in, day out, without weekends!) to visit Aryatara Community, the Croydon Arts Centre, Hockneys restaurant, Rivendell, the Dhanakshosa Community in Brighton, and Sukhavati Community in East London. The day after his return he was back to his usual programme.

August 26th this year is the Venerable Sangharakshita's sixtieth birthday, and Order members worldwide are determined that this year he is provided with all the facilities he needs for his work. The first task is to find the personnel and finance for a proper secretariat of six members. A team is slowly beginning to form. Subhuti has been functioning as the Venerable Sangharakshita's secretary for more than four years and Vessantara for about three. However, for the past two years Vessantara has been taken up with leading the Tuscany Ordination retreats for men, and with chairing Aid For India. This has left him with little time for the secretariat. Fortunately Dharmadara from New Zealand joined the team temporarily at the beginning of the year and has now decided to stay on indefinitely. Kovida has returned to Padmaloka after a two year absence and has immediately taken charge of expanding the Order Office accommodation by moving the retreat community from the main house into caravans. Buddhapalita has just joined the team and is learning to type. Buddhadasa is over from New Zealand for the Tuscany Ordination Retreat and is helping out whilst he is here.



The new FWBO Centre premises in Leeds

We still need more senior Order members to help the Venerable Sangharakshita with his work and to begin to take over more and more of his responsibilities, and we still need a regular income to support them.

The main house at Padmaloka is gradually being emptied of retreat community members so that the secretariat can expand, and a property is being sought in Italy in which to establish a retreat centre for the Ordination process and the Venerable Sangharakshita's winter quarters.

Besides helping the Venerable Sangharakshita with his work, the Order Office has a number of different functions. *Mitrata* is edited from the Office, greatly aided by the *Mitrata* Production Team, a group of women in Norwich headed by Srimala who research material, prepare copy, arrange production, and distribute the magazine. A computer has recently been purchased for this team so that better quality copy can be produced.

The Venerable Sangharakshita's next book, *Travel Letters*, has recently been typeset using the machine. In connection with *Mitrata*, a team of editors is being trained to take over the task of editing seminar material for the Venerable Sangharakshita - work which he has been doing himself until recently.

Order Office personnel are also involved in giving talks, seminars and classes both at FWBO centres and to other groups. Dharmadara recently gave a talk to the Southall Ambedkar Buddhist Association. In April Vessantara and Dharmadara led a day-retreat for the Leicester Buddhist group (in Leicester). Members of the Order Office have been visiting the group regularly for some time now, and an increasingly friendly relationship is developing between us.

Members of the Order Office team contribute articles and essays for FWBO publications and for other journals. Vessantara is preparing a paper for the proceedings of the SHAP conference on religious education and Ratnaprabha is contributing a paper to a conference organised by Kings College, London, on evangelisation in new religious movements. Subhuti spent the early part of last year writing a basic intro-

duction to Buddhism based upon the Wheel Of Life, the Spiral Path, and the Mandala of the Five Buddhas. This is now to be published by Rider on October 14th under the title *The Buddhist Vision*.

The major FWBO public event of 1985 is to be the launch of the Venerable Sangharakshita's new book, *The Eternal Legacy*, together with a new edition of *A Survey of Buddhism*. On Thursday August 29th at 6pm, at Friends House, Euston Road, London, Tharpa Publications will be unveiling the books (and incidentally themselves, since these are their first titles). The Venerable Sangharakshita will give a talk and answer questions. This will be his only public appearance this year, and immediately precedes his departure for Tuscany and the Ordination retreat.

This event will take place just four days after his sixtieth birthday and we are planning to give him a birthday present he really wants and needs. An appeal has been launched throughout the FWBO to raise the £250,000 needed to provide him with adequate secretarial facilities, proper headquarters in Britain, and winter quarters in Italy. Every Friend, mitra, and Order member is being asked to pledge themselves to raise £250 by the end of this year. Already some £30,000 has been pledged or donated. If you would like to help please send your pledge or donation to:

60th Birthday Appeal Fund
Padmaloka
Lesingham House
Surlingham
Norwich
NR14 7AL

Please make cheques payable to FWBO Surlingham.

VAJRA FILMS

At Padmaloka Men's Event last March Garry Pierpoint, armed with video camera, launched Vajra Films. Over a hundred people witnessed him recording their every move from meditation and puja to study and talks. He also recorded interviews by Suvajra with the Venerable Sangharakshita and Subhuti, and the wealth of material produced has resulted in four edited VHS video programmes. Their aim is to inform, teach and inspire as many people coming in contact with the FWBO

as possible and forging ever stronger links between centres throughout the world.

The four programmes are:

1. A Padmaloka Men's Event which over eighty minutes looks in depth at a men's event showing and exploring its many aspects, and includes an interview with the Venerable Sangharakshita.
2. Incidents in The Life of The Buddha. A complete record of the symposium of talks chaired by the Venerable Sangharakshita, presented on a Men's Event, available in two parts.
3. Buddhism For Today, An Interview with Subhuti. A 25 minute programme in which Subhuti discusses the themes of his book *Buddhism For Today* with Suvajra, providing an ideal introduction for newcomers to the FWBO.
4. Sangharakshita in Interview which consists of an exclusive interview by Suvajra in which, for nearly an hour, the Venerable Sangharakshita discusses many topics such as retreats, friendship, single sex situations, meditation, study and puja with his usual great clarity and humour.

Having received great praise at their previews, they are now available for sale or hire.

If you would like further details of the video programmes please write to Garry Pierpoint Vajra Films, Grdhrakuta, 18 Burlington Road, Manchester

R.E. TEACHERS

"Could you explain the Buddhist doctrine of karma and rebirth to me?" ... "Thank you, now how do I get that across to a class of twelve-year olds?"

That was a typical example of the many questions Dh. Vessantara had to answer recently, when he attended a conference in Chichester organised by SHAP, a co-ordinating group for people

involved in teaching Religious Education. About fifty teachers attended the weekend, from all over England. While most had some theoretical knowledge of Buddhism, few had had contact with actual practitioners of the Dharma. The conference, entitled *The Presence and Practice of Buddhism*, aimed to rectify this omission.

It was a very full weekend. There were seven talks, the speakers including Dr. Karel Werner, lecturer in Indian Religion at Durham University, and Nick Ribush, director of Wisdom Publications. In addition there were seminars, videos, and a visit to Chithurst Forest Monastery. As his contribution, Vessantara gave a talk on 'Buddhism in Daily Life', and led four short seminars and a session of meditation.

Buddhism is appearing more frequently on school syllabuses these days, but it still has a reputation of being difficult to teach, as it is seen as being more intellectually demanding than the other major religions. Also there is a lack of stimulating and reliable resource material on Buddhism for teachers to use. The FWBO clearly has a role to play in providing back-up for teachers. Order members already visit schools, and school parties visit our centres from time to time. We can do much more than this by laying on seminars on Buddhism for teachers and producing resource materials tailored to their needs.

Their exposure to Buddhists and Buddhist meditation had a strong impact on some of the teachers, and should enable them to 'bring alive' the Dharma for more of their students. To adapt the *Dhammapadam*: "Better than a thousand academic textbooks on Buddhism is one single weekend spent meeting Buddhists!"

VAJRALOKA

Vajraloka seems set to enter a new phase in 1985. As usual for the early months of the year it has been very quiet, with just a few guests joining the retreat. But a number of things are happening in other areas.

Kamalasila has been spending some time away at other centres giving talks and leading meditation events. One principle reason for this is to give people a better idea of how to prepare for Vajraloka.

The talks have had two broad themes. One theme was how to work in meditation - what to do in order to get beyond the Five Hindrances, and how to establish oneself in or near the dhyana state once one has done this. His second theme was the retreat lifestyle, the Brahma-Life - the monastic life - and the FWBO. Everyone takes the Brahmacharya (chastity) precept while at Vajraloka: what is the advantage? What is the connection with meditation? Kamalasila hopes that his more outward-going activities will encourage everyone with a regular practice to partake of periods of intensive meditation more regularly than they do.

With two new members, we have a new community at Vajraloka. Dharmananda, ex-Windhorse Trading, and Satyananda, a recently ordained New Zealander, look set for a long and fruitful stay here. Recently our approach to the retreat has had more of an emphasis upon teaching meditation: we now have regular evening question & answer sessions with the community. These have proved very successful, not only in clearing up difficulties and unclear points connected with meditation practice, but also in mak-

ing more conscious the whole process of making an effort in meditation - the whole question of what one is actually trying to do. Generally in the 'Friends' we could probably talk about our practice more: with practice at the centre of everything, at Vajraloka, the questions are far closer to our experience. And all this, of course, keeps the community on its toes, which is a very good thing!

As well as giving talks, Kamalasila has been talking to the community, and to architects and designers, in order to come up with a plan for the completion of the grounds and unused outbuildings.

The study and meditation community at Blaenddol, just a mile away down the track, is now functioning, its building work almost complete. It is a beautiful house with a good library and pleasant rooms. Some work remains to be done over the summer, and offers of help will be favourably received.

The short article on *Solitary Retreat Accommodation* has produced a small direct response and a flurry of interest through the movement. Some centres are trying to find their own places. At Vajraloka we have had some offers of donations, including one to set up two caravans, any profit from which will go towards the Venerable Sangharakshita's secretariat. The problem is that we do not have the facilities to organise this. Are any readers interested in helping? We have set up a fund for donations, and hope eventually to buy more cottages in Wales or elsewhere. Smaller projects are also possible.

INDIA PUNE AND BOMBAY

The programme that stands out most in the last three months is the send-off for Padmasuri on 26th March. Padmasuri has been working here for two-and-a-half years as a nurse and social worker in our project at Dapodi. During this time she has also conducted Dhamma activities for local ladies. In the first three months of this year she led three week-long retreats with ladies attending from Pune, Aurangabad, Bombay, Ulhasnagar, and Sholapur. In the programme she was presented with a shawl by TBMSG and a number of personal gifts. From the talks that evening it was clear that her work in Dapodi and her Dhamma teaching have been very much appreciated and she will be missed very much.

We hope she will be returning in September or October for six months, and thereafter spend six months here a year. She will not be doing social work, just teaching the Dhamma, as there is so much demand from women all over Maharashtra for her.

We have had visits from a number of Dhammacaris: from UK, Australia, Finland and New Zealand. Satyapala came here on behalf of Aid For India to advise us on the management of our social projects. Nagabodhi came to write a book which is concerned with TBMSG and the Buddhist conversion movement started by Dr. Ambedkar.

He was cut off in Panchgani, a nearby hill-station, to write it up. However, rumour has it that Panchgani Buddhists persuaded him to give some talks on Buddha Day.

Our Lohagaon hostel is now complete, and the opening ceremony was held on 28th April. Attended by a Buddhist M.P., Professor N.M. Kamble (once secretary to Dr. Ambedkar) and the Minister of Social Welfare for Maharashtra state, Mr. Sudhakarrao Naik. The new school year starts in June and we will have forty boys living in our hostel then. Our Dapodi work has taken a very long time due to numerous complications, but this building has only taken a year.

The other building activity in Pune is the first stage of our medical centre. This has been going rather slowly but the ground floor should be operational from June and the first floor soon after that.

At Bhaja, where we have our Saddhamma Pradip meditation centre, we have stopped building but have purchased another six acres of land. We are trying to get more land, and only then will we draw up plans for the rest of the buildings. In the meantime we are growing rice and planting trees. Last year we planted two hundred, and this year we plan to plant at least as many again.

We have a full programme of retreats there, and in May we have a one-month Order/mitra retreat. Bombay and Ulhasnagar have held two retreats recently. The first, in February, was a weekend at Ambernath, not far from Ulhasnagar. Seventy-five people attended, two of whom had their mitra ceremonies.



The newly completed hostel at Lohagaon

Recently a special men's retreat was held at Bhaja, with a further two mitra ceremonies.

At Ulhasnagar we have purchased a small plot of land with a building, and are in the process of purchasing the adjoining plot. This will enable us to open our second hostel.

Our excursions into the rest of Maharashtra continue. Jyotipal and Sanghasen are on a month's tour of Vidharba, said to be the hottest part of India at this time of year. Every day they give one or two lectures in different places. This will culminate in a five-day retreat. Meanwhile Asvajit and Sudarshan are making inroads in the south of Maharashtra: Sanghi and Satara, an area we have not entered before. In May Asvajit and Bodhisen will be spending two weeks on the annual Konkan tour, the coastal district south of Bombay.

Lokamitra made a brief trip to Sravasti at the end of March for the punyana modana ceremony for Ven. Sangharatana Maha Thera (familiar to those who have read *The Thousand Petalled Lotus*) and travelled to the Buddhist holy places. While there he was able to meet a number of bhikshus of the Mahabodhi Society who were very impressed by what we are doing in Maharashtra.

Finally, we have started Triratna Tapes, to sell cassettes of lectures Bhante has given both here and in the UK. This has been going for six months and so far we have sold £500 worth, and we have only just got going. Even though we cannot go to all the towns and villages, we hope that through the tapes Sangharakshita's teaching will be communicated.

AURANGABAD

The big event for us in the last few months was really quite small. Only fifteen people took part, but out of those fifteen eight became mitras, committing themselves more deeply to the Dhamma and its expression through our movement. We don't have a centre of our own yet; we borrow our space to hold regular classes and mitra study groups. But now we do have people, committed people, and they are more important. Three of them are from Jalna, a town two hours bus ride away. These mitras conduct a regular class at Jalna, and are organising a four day retreat there in May. Lokamitra came here in April and gave talks in Aurangabad and Jalna to celebrate the birthday of Dr. Ambedkar. The talks had to be in the morning and afternoon, because in the evening everyone took to the streets, some in lorries or rickshaws, some on floats. In places like Aurangabad the expression of joy and celebration goes on all night, people returning home next morning covered in blue dye, which people throw over everything and everybody!

We are in the process of buying land to build a boy's hostel here. When the deal is completed it will provide a focus and stimulant for all our energies, and help us learn to work together more.

Jyotipala has again been to Hyderabad for a week and to Bombay for ten days, giving talks, while Nagasena continues to take both the regulars and mitra classes. They both came together on 12th April for an important talk at the Government Engineering College.



Sangharatana with Sangharakshita at Sarnath

THE VENERABLE SANGHARATANA

Those who are familiar with the life and work of Anagarika Dharmapala and those who have visited the Buddhist holy places, especially Sravasti, will be very sad to hear of the death of Venerable Sangharatana on 31st December 1984. A Sramanera at the age of fourteen, he was trained and taken to India by the great Dharmapala where he dedicated his life to the restoration of the Buddhist holy places.

Until comparatively recently Buddha Gaya Temple was in the sole control of a Hindu Mahant and it was difficult for Buddhist pilgrims to worship

there. (Even today the temple is not in the complete control of Buddhists.) The other holy places were little more than pigs' feeding grounds and hide-outs for local bandits. This was the state the Ven. Sangharatana found Sravasti when he first visited some fifty years ago, - on the back of an elephant because there were no roads there. Even in the 1960's things were little better at Sravasti, there being no facilities for pilgrims despite the fact that it was here that the Buddha spent more time than anywhere else, and gave eighty per cent of the Pali suttas. There-

AHMEDABAD

Since our last report, Dhamma activities have continued in a very steady, if undramatic, way. Mangala recently finished a weekly study group on the *Ti Ratana Vandana* and will soon start another on 'Dr Ambedkar's Dhamma Revolution' (a lecture given by Sangharakshita in Bombay). Ratnakar and Bakul have both been active, giving talks on the Six Perfections, with Ratnakar going to Bapungar vihara and Bakul to our own vihara.

Since the beginning of the year we have had three very successful day-retreats and have decided to make those a regular event with one every month. On our retreat on April 3rd, Ramesh Solanki, one of our regular Friends, had his mitra ceremony. We have also planned a five-day retreat for the end of May, which will be the first long retreat we have held here for several years. It should do a lot to further strengthen our activities here.

We have also been active outside Ahmedabad. In January Mangala spent two weeks in Bombay doing locality talks most nights of the week, and in February he paid a visit to Surat where both he and Vimalakirti, from Pune,

gave talks. On Ambedkar Jayanti Bakul and Mangala visited Surendranagar where they both gave talks to a large audience, while Ratnakar and several friends went to a nearby village to do a programme there. We had not been to either of these places before, so hopefully a few more Dhamma seeds have been planted.

From April 28th to May 3rd Mangala led a retreat at our Bhaja centre before returning to Ahmedabad for Buddha Jayanti. Originally he had intended to follow this retreat with a lecture tour of the Konkan region, south of Bombay, but as it seems likely we will be purchasing the land for our proposed hostel very soon, he decided not to go, and Ashvajit will go in his place.

Buddha Jayanti should see us with a new Gujarati publication: a booklet consisting of Ven. Sangharakshita's three lectures *Buddha, Man or God, The Path of The Dhamma, and The Future of The Sangha*, which have been translated into Gujarati by Bakul and Ratnakar.

Being a little out of the way, Ahmedabad tends to be bypassed by foreign friends who visit India, so it was very nice to have Nagabodhi with us for a week in February. His talk to about a hundred people at Bapung-

agar was very well received. Satyapala too paid us a flying visit in March, mainly in connection with our hostel project, and his questions and advice in this respect proved very helpful.

This report would hardly be complete without some mention of the riots that have been happening here recently. At the time of writing this report the whole city is under curfew, with the army and police patrolling the streets. The riots and curfew have considerably interrupted our activities, and Mangala has had to leave our vihara, where he lives, as it is inside the curfew zone and in a fairly sensitive area. The riots started in connection with the government's policy of reserving places in educational establishments and jobs for the under-privileged classes, and there has been burning and looting of shops, killing, and general communal violence on an unprecedented scale. One good thing from all this might be that people become more receptive to the Dhamma and the principles of Buddhism as the best and surest way to overcome this communal strife. But this will depend to a large extent on us, and how effective we can be in spreading the Buddha's message. There is a lot to be done here in Ahmedabad.

Seven years ago when I first visited India, Ven. Sangharakshita suggested that I go and meet his old friend Ven. Sangharatana and take the opportunity to see Sravasti. In the end I spent seven weeks on retreat there, extremely well looked after by him. (I wrote about my experience in Newsletter 39) What most impressed me about Ven. Sangharatana was his complete dedication to his teacher. Although dead for over forty years Dharmapala was always with him, in his dreams and in his memory. He had some similar traits to his teacher, especially having no time for hypocrisy or pretence. He was especially disappointed in the bhikshus of his native Sri Lanka, whom he felt should be following Dharmapala's example of total dedication to the practice and teaching of the Dharma.

He admired very much what Sangharakshita was doing in the west to spread the Dharma. He had always thought very highly of Sangharakshita during their long years of association in India, and was very pleased to be in contact with a disciple of his. As a result Sravasti has become an important landmark on the pilgrimage route of members and Friends of the Western Buddhist Order.

To all pilgrims, wherever they came from, Ven. Sangharatana was very welcoming. He insisted on showing every party and every individual pilgrim around the whole of Sravasti and the Jeta Grove, linking the different places with different stories and teachings of the Buddha. I was amazed at his energy, the source of which was quite clearly his very deep feelings of devotion to the Buddha. It was this that was communicated to the pilgrims and made them all very grateful. Such a guide could not be found in any other holy place.

When I was there his main worry was that he would not live to see the vihara completed. Recently I received an urgent message from him asking me to go and visit him because he had become very ill and weak, and did not know how much longer he would live. I went to Lucknow and found him in hospital with cancer of the stomach, and so weak that he couldn't even take the drip-feed. Despite this, his mind was still very much alive and we had a good talk. He asked me to go to Sravasti to see his vihara which I did. Everything was complete except for the murals on the shrine walls. So many important events in the life of the Buddha had taken place there, such as the Twin Miracle, the gift of land by Anathapindika, the conversion of Angulimala, the teaching of the Mangala Sutta and the Karaniya Metta Sutta. Here Bahiya of the Bark Garment met the Buddha, here Prasenajit, Mallika and Visakha would come to listen to the Buddha. Ven. Sangharatana wanted to bring alive the rich spiritual history of Sravasti in the minds of the pilgrims through the murals he had planned.

He was extremely disappointed that the work had not been completed and he was not able to see the opening of the vihara to which he had dedicated the last twenty-five years of his life. I was so grateful to him for all he had done for me, his hospitality, communicating something of the spirit of Dharmapala and conjuring up the magic of Sravasti that I wanted to do what I could to put his mind at rest. I said that I would do everything I could to help raise the £4,500 necessary for the murals (to be painted by a master painter from Lucknow). I am not quite sure how I am going to do this except with the help of my brothers and sisters in the FWBO throughout the world. Groups and centres might think of giving an evening's dana collection. Individuals might like to make personal contributions. Contributions may be made payable to FWBO Surlingham and sent to Padmaloka. This won't be contributing to an FWBO centre but it will be the most appropriate way in which we can show our appreciation of a life spent in the footsteps of Anagarika Dharmapala and in the service of the Dharma.

CORRECTION

Vajratara community was established by the Dharmasara Buddhist Vihara sangha and not only by Dharmacarini Jayapushpa as stated in Newsletter no.62.



A meditation session on the German retreat

GERMANY

At the beginning of this year Order members in Germany tried out a new approach, at least new for FWBO Germany: They offered an intensive block of activities in Essen, their base, and in the neighbouring town of Bochum. In spite of extensive publicity the response was poor, at least for the core of the programme, two Dharma courses. On the other hand, the day retreats were full and went well, and have continued regularly ever

since, with extra retreats added to meet the increasing demand.

The intensive period happened to end on a carnival weekend. This is an opportunity to get drunk and make a lot of noise. Escaping from this environment, quite a number of Friends, both old and new, gathered for a three day retreat in the western hill-country. In the midst of snow and storms they meditated and studied and joined in the first Parinirvana Day celebration of FWBO Germany.

As you have probably read, FWBO Holland is also getting

underway. So Dhammaloka and a German mitra joined a Dutch retreat in March, and over Easter German and Dutch Order members, mitras and Friends enjoyed an excellent week of study in Germany. Sagaramati came over from London especially to lead study on the Dhammapada, which all found very stimulating.

In May the FWBO will be holding its southernmost German retreat - in the depths of the Black Forest not far from Switzerland. You will be able to read about it in the next Newsletter.



Brigits mitra ceremony

HOLLAND

With Vajragita back in Holland, the number of FWBO activities increases rapidly. We continue to hold regular three-day retreats and our monthly day retreats. Because Vajragita leads these retreats and Gunabhadri supports them, it is possible for the first time to hold these retreats in Dutch. A mitra, Anneke Smelik, translated Mitratas 'Perfect Vision' and 'Perfect Mindfulness'. A number of new activities have been initiated by Vajragita. For the first time we celebrated Sangha Day, Parinirvana Day and Wesak. These festivities bring a whole new dimension to the Dutch sangha.

Vajragita has started a weekly meditation class and a weekly study evening for mitras. And there are still more 'first times' taking place in Holland. On the retreat in March we received a new Dutch mitra,

Brigit Adriaens, into the sangha. For the first time the mitra ceremony was led by a Dutch Order member. With the help of mitras, Vajragita organised the first course in Buddhism and meditation, during which she gave talks on the Five Spiritual Faculties. Sixteen new people attended this successful course.

Within a few weeks we will start a second course, the theme of which will be The Wheel of Life and The Spiral Path.

In April Devamitra came over to lead a study weekend for regulars on texts taken from the Pali Canon about the communication of the Buddha. Right now we are organising our first ten-day retreat which will take place in August.

So with the inspiring presence of Vajragita, FWBO Netherlands is full of energy and faith in spreading the Dharma. After only a few months of new activities it does not seem premature to say that Vajragita has created opportunities for Dutch people to find the Jewel in the Lotus.



Ratnapriya, Mahendra and Sarvamitra outside the new community

FINLAND

The most significant development in Finland recently has been the acquisition of large premises for a men's community. At the beginning of the year Ratnapriya, Punyaraja and Ari moved from the small flat they had been sharing for about a year in Helsinki. They were joined by Mahendra and later by Sarvamitra who returned from England to study the Dharma in Finland. There is still a lot of room for new people and we are expecting two or three to join for trial periods over the summer. So far we have had visits from Devamitra and Buddhadasa so that we have had up to six Order members staying here at one time. Devamitra visited Finland in his capacity as mitra convenor. He led two retreats, took three study groups, and gave a public talk, as well as meeting Order members and mitras personally. Nine years ago, Buddhadasa lived in Finland for a year to help initiate activities here, and he took this opportunity to come over and meet some old friends and re-establish contact.

AUCKLAND

The Auckland Buddhist Centre has gone nomadic. In December we moved out of the Centre we have had for the last 7½ years. We decided to take the leap to owning our own Centre. Since then we have used many means, traditional and novel, to raise the money we will need to buy our Centre. So far the fund-raising has been going according to schedule and we hope to purchase a property in early 1986.

While we have been without a Centre, Dharma activities have not diminished but flourished. So far this year we have had a series of very successful events. Top of this list was the Buddhist Summer Open Retreat. Ten days of sun, sky, sea, meditation, study and Dharma talks. This was our largest retreat to date involving 47 people from as far afield as England, Australia and the United States. Other retreats of note are our largest women's retreat and a women's art retreat.

We have just finished two very successful courses that have run simultaneously: At Outreach, the Auckland City Council Arts Centre, we held a meditation course with forty newcomers attending. And at the Continuing Education Department of Auckland University, Priyananda and Purna have turned a few heads with their brilliant series of eight talks on Mahayana Buddhism. With 72 people enrolled, this is the most popular course at the department. It also brings the number of courses we present at the university to three - one a term. In July we have the meditation workshops which should prove a great success.

Our regular classes are continuing at rented rooms near the university, a stone's throw from the city centre.

The community, called Padmanartesavara (or the Lotus Lord of Dance), is situated half an hour's journey from Helsinki in a sparsely populated suburb of Kauniainen with lots of large old wooden houses like ours. The house lies on the southern slope of a hill so that we get a lot of sunshine in our orchard. We expect to retain the property for at least one year, possibly two, and during this time make the most we can of community life. It is possible to hold weekend retreats here, which we plan to do at least once a month, as well as garden festivals and the like.

This spring the women in Helsinki held a study seminar conducted by Bodhisiri on The Ten Pillars of Buddhism. These women's nights consist of studying one of the Pillars, alternating with a special jewel puja every other week, devoted to one of the Pillars, with the shrine decorated accordingly.

The Essence of Zen was published in Finnish at the end of last year, as "Zen - olemus ja ydin" and we hope to follow that with The Ten Pillars of Buddhism later this year.

SYDNEY

This last month has brought about two events of considerable importance to us. Firstly, we had our very first 'homegrown' mitra created. Esther Muller, who works for Nuclear Disarmament, is the first local person to have come across Western Buddhism here and make the decision to go further. Her ceremony marks the end of the first stage in the setting up of a centre here. The Sydney centre is now well established and ready to go on to greater things. This brings us to our second important event.

Our premises at Rocklands Road are too small and we have been looking for a larger centre. In fact it was Dharmamati who had been doing the looking. "I keep my eye out for To Let signs" he said, "just like that one over there." That one over there, as it turned out, proved eminently suitable as it had twice the area of our present centre and is ideally located. We have submitted the necessary applications to the City Council and are patiently waiting for approval. The project will require lots of enthusiasm and will provide that opportunity for us and our supporters to work together in a concrete manner.

Our "New Centre Appeal" reached its financial goal just one week before FWBO Day and this money will fund the necessary renovation.

Other events have been a day workshop which presented Buddhism, World Peace & Nuclear War on video, two regular retreats, and the introduction of short Buddhism courses, during which we explain in four sessions the Three Jewels, Buddhist Ethics, and Devotion.

Our final snippet of news is that Vajrasuri will be attending

the Order Convention and other events in England through June and July.

BOSTON

In January a change in personnel at the Boston Centre was agreed. Vajradaka, who had been active at the centre for four years, returned to the UK in the spring. Vidyaratna, who was visiting the Boston Centre from the London Buddhist Centre also returned to England when his visa expired in March. Punya, the third member of the Boston team, stayed, and Manjvajra moved back to Boston from the pretty harbour town where he had spent the winter.

The activities at the centre were thoroughly reviewed and a new long-term plan for the FWBO in the Boston area were discussed, with the result that we decided to try to be far more outgoing than we had been in the past. Our ability to mail information concerning our activities to people who have been in contact with the centre has been streamlined with the help of a computer. At the end of April Manjvajra gave a talk on meditation at Northeastern University: the first, it is hoped, of a number of such talks.

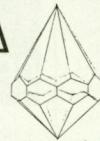
These talks will be followed by courses in meditation, if interest can be aroused. At the centre we still hold one meeting for beginners, one for regulars, and a Sunday afternoon meeting which has a varied programme and which is open to anyone. So far this year we have held retreats every six weeks, and they have been well attended - so well that we have now to decide on new, more spacious, premises. Our first two-week summer retreat has been planned, and a beautiful,

isolated house in the Green Mountains of Vermont has been hired for the second and third weeks of August.

The end of March and beginning of April was a good time for visitors: Pavel Hrma, a mitra from Cleveland, was in town for a conference, and spent some time at the centre. Alan Brooks, another mitra who now lives in Maine, spent two days with us, helping to sort out things in the new centre office and discussing his plans to start a meditation group in Lubec, Maine, which is on the Canadian border. Later in the month Samu Sunim who founded the Zen Buddhist Temples in Toronto, Canada, and in Ann Arbor, Michigan, visited the centre with Sujata, the editor of Spring Wind (their quarterly publication). Our discussion centred on AFI and TMSG activities in India (in which he has a particular interest), Buddhism in America and the difficulties in establishing a Buddhist centre. Samu Sunim, unlike many Eastern Buddhist teachers (he is Korean) has a superb command of the English language and acute understanding of Western culture. His forthright manner and concentrated Dharma talk was very refreshing.

Perhaps the most important news this quarter is that Aryadaka has returned from Tuscany to Seattle, Washington, where he lives with his wife and two children. He has already given talks at the Dharmadhatu (Chogyam Trungpa's centre) in Bellingham, has started to gather some friends for meditation meetings, and investigated a place that would be suitable for retreats. This means that the FWBO now has a presence in Boston, on the east coast, Seattle, on the west coast, and Cleveland in the mid-west.

VAJRA FILMS



Are proud to present 5 new videos

'A PADMALOKA MEN'S EVENT'

'SANGHARAKSHITA IN INTERVIEW'

'BUDDHISM FOR TODAY. AN INTERVIEW WITH DH.SUBHUTI'

'INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA' (IN TWO PARTS)

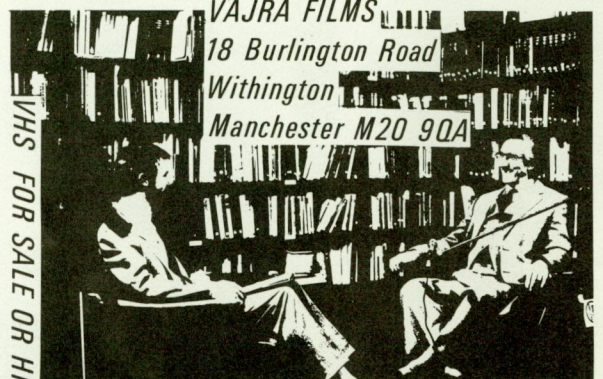
CONTACT: Garry Pierpoint

VAJRA FILMS

18 Burlington Road

Withington

Manchester M20 9QA



see the Video report in Facets

M · I · T · R · A · T · A

Bi-monthly Magazine for Practising Buddhists

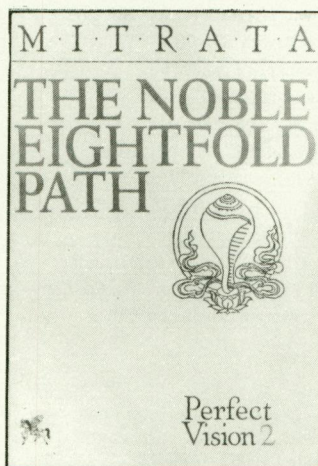
The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path

— a central teaching of Buddhism explored in depth

Ven. Sangharakshita, a leading Western Buddhist, gives an account of each step on the Path and discusses, in extracts from seminars, issues arising from its theory and practice. This is a practical, thought provoking, and highly relevant account which shows how Buddhism can be lived by men and women today.

Back issues and remaining issues in this series (16 issues) can be purchased for £16 from:

Windhorse Publications,
136 Renfield St.,
Glasgow G2 AU.



Padmaloka

Buddhist Community Retreat Centre

COURSES JULY–NOV '85

Open Summer Retreat

12–21 July

This year's Summer Retreat will be led by Vessantara, a senior member of the Western Buddhist Order who is very experienced in leading such events. We feel very fortunate that he is able to come on this retreat. The programme is suitable for all men, with or without experience of meditation. Classes in Yoga and possibly Karate, will be open to all who wish to attend. An event not to be missed!

Meditation and Buddhism Course

20–22 September

A residential weekend course for men in the Norfolk countryside, led by a senior member of the Western Buddhist Order. The course will give an introduction to two basic but important meditation practices, and will also have periods of study and discussion on both traditional and modern Buddhism.

Karate and Meditation Course

18–20 October

Dharmavira (2nd Dan Shotokan) ex-Scottish National Team, will give instruction in Karate. His skill and ability to teach have made these weekends our most popular Martial Arts events. An introduction to meditation will be given. All karate styles and grades welcome.

Tai Chi and Meditation Course

22–24 November

This weekend is suitable for beginners to both the art of Tai Chi and to Meditation. Sthirananda, who teaches on this weekend, has a great deal of experience in teaching Tai Chi and combining it with the practice of Meditation, to the mutual benefit of both practices.

Please note that all events are for men only.

The cost of weekend courses is £25, £18 for low income groups.

Other retreats cost £8 per night, minimum stay 5 nights.

For further details or to book please contact:

The Course Organiser, Padmaloka, Lesingham House,

Surlingham, Norfolk NR14 7AL

☎ 050 88 8112



Vajraloka

The Buddhist Meditation Centre of North Wales



is a year-round meditation retreat in ideal conditions. Visitors with a regular meditation practice — or with enough experience — can join the retreat at any weekend. Most of the time it is for men; some months are open to women. Occasional periods of more intense practice, in supportive conditions, provide a very good opportunity for taking your meditation a bit deeper. If your meditation is important to you, why not consider spending a week or more here?

More details on request from:

Vajraloka, The Buddhist Meditation Centre of North Wales, Tyn-y-Ddol, Corwen, Clwyd. LL21 0EN.

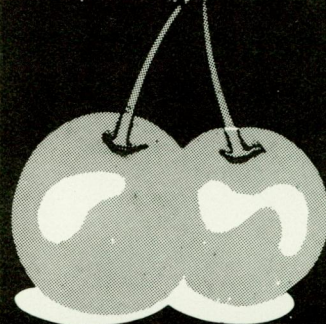


A Centre of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

A SECOND BITE AT THE CHERRY

Bethnal Green's Vegetarian Café with Garden. Fresh salads, home-made food and cakes all prepared daily.

Tuesday Wednesday Friday Saturday
10am – 8.30pm
Thursday 10am – 2.30pm
Sunday & Monday CLOSED



The Cherry Orchard,
241 Globe Road E2 Tel: 01-980 6678

Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

Centres and Branches

<i>London Buddhist Centre</i> , 51 Roman Road, Bethnal Green, London E2 0HU. 01-981 1225
<i>Brighton Buddhist Centre</i> , 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex BN2 3HF. 0273-698420
<i>Croydon Buddhist Centre</i> , 96-98 High Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1ND. 01-688 8624
<i>Manchester Buddhist Centre</i> , 18 Burlington Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9QA. 061-445 3805
<i>Glasgow Buddhist Centre</i> , 329 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow G2 3HW. 041-333 0524
<i>West London Buddhist Centre</i> , 7 Colville Houses, London W11 1JB. 01-727 9382 (from September)
<i>Bristol Buddhist Centre</i> , 120 Long Ashton Road, Long Ashton, Bristol, Avon BS18 9LS. 0272-392 463
<i>Norwich Buddhist Centre</i> , 41A All Saints Green, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 3LY. 0603-27034
<i>Leeds Buddhist Centre</i> , 148 Harehills Avenue, Leeds, LS8 4EU. 0532-405880
<i>Padmaloka Retreat Centre</i> , Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, Norfolk NR14 7AL. 050-88 8112
<i>Vajraloka Meditation Centre</i> , Tyn-y-ddol, Tredol, Nr Corwen LL21 0EN. N.Wales. (Visitors by appointment.) 0490-81406
<i>Helsingen Buddhalainen Keskus</i> , PL 288, SF-00121, Helsinki 12, Finland
<i>Auckland Buddhist Centre</i> , PO Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand
<i>Wellington Buddhist Centre</i> , PO Box 12311, Wellington North, New Zealand
<i>Boston Buddhist Centre</i> , 470 Centre Street, Boston, MA 02130, USA. (617) 522-0336
<i>Sydney Meditation Community</i> , 13 Rocklands Road, Wollstonecraft, NSW 2D65, Australia
<i>TBMSG Pune</i> : 'Dhammavijay', 32 Dr Ambedkar Society, Pune 411006, India
<i>TBMSG Aurangabad</i> : c/o Bungalow No 2, Cantonment, Aurangabad, India
<i>TBMSG Bombay</i> : 25 Bhim Prerana, Tapodhan Nagar, Bandra (E), Bombay 400051, India
<i>TBMSG Ahmedabad</i> : c/o Bakul Bhavan. Behind Gujarat Vaishya Sabha, Jamalpur Rd, Ahmedabad 38001, India
<i>FWBO Stockholm</i> , Hillbersvagen 5, S-126 54 Hagersten, Sweden. Stockholm 97 59 92
<i>FWBO Germany</i> , Rechtstr. 9, 43 Essen 11, W.Germany

Representatives

<i>Aryavamsa</i> , Elleholmsvagen 11, S-352 43 Vaxjo, Sweden
<i>FWBO Netherlands</i> , P.O. Box 1559, 3500 BN Utrecht, Netherlands. 030-949109
<i>Jayapushpa</i> , Lot 7, Taman Ria, Jallan Salleh, Muar, Johore, Malaysia.

Co-operatives

<i>The Blue Lotus Co-operative Ltd</i> , 113 Notting Hill Gate, London W11 3LB. 01-727 9382
<i>Golden Light Co-operative</i> , PO Box 68-453, Newton, Auckland, New Zealand
<i>The Padmaloka Co-operative</i> , Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norfolk NR14 7AL. 050-88 8112
<i>The Pure Land Co-operative</i> , 51 Roman Road, London E2 0HU. 01-981 1960
<i>Windhorse Associates</i> , 119 Roman Road, London E2 0QN. 01-981 5157
<i>Windhorse Enterprises Ltd</i> , 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex BN2 3HF. 0273-698420
<i>Windhorse Wholefoods Co-operative Ltd</i> , 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G20 6DW. 041-946 2035
<i>Phoenix Community Housing Co-operative Ltd</i> , 119 Roman Road, London E2 0QN. 01-980 1069
<i>Rainbow Co-operative Ltd</i> , 96-98 High Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1ND. 01-688 2899
<i>Windhorse Trading Ltd</i> , 29-31 Old Ford Road, London E2 9PJ. 01-980 4221
<i>Whitehall Housing Co-operative Ltd</i> , 7 Colville Houses, London W11 1JB. 01-727 9382

Communities

(Visitors by arrangement only)

<i>Amitayus</i> , 15 Park Crescent Place, Brighton, Sussex BN2 3HF. 0273-698420
<i>Aryatara</i> , 3 Plough Lane, Purley, Surrey CR2 3QB. 01-660 2542
<i>Grdhrakuta</i> , 18 Burlington Road, Withington, Manchester M20 9QA. 061-445 3805
<i>Heruka</i> , 13 Kelvinside Terrace South, Glasgow G20 6DW. 041-946 2035
<i>Kalpadruma</i> , 43 Gleneldon Road, Streatham, London SW16 2AX. 01-677 7381
<i>Khadiravani</i> , 59 Babington Road, London SW16 6AN. 01-677 9564
<i>Padmaloka</i> , Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norfolk NR14 7AL. 050-88 8112
<i>Padmavyuha</i> , 7 Colville Houses, London W11 1JB. 01-727 9382
<i>Ratnaloka</i> , 14 Latchmere Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6AL
<i>Sarvasiddhi</i> , 18 Colders Green Crescent, London NW11 8LE
<i>Samayatara</i> , 18 Approach Road, London E2 9LY
<i>Sudurjaya</i> , 120 Long Ashton Road, Long Ashton, Bristol, Avon BS18 9LS. 0272-392 463
<i>Sukhavati</i> , 51 Roman Road, London E2 0HU. 01-980 5972
<i>Suvarnabhasha</i> , 3 Ickburgh Road, London E5 8AF. 01-806 5222
<i>Suviya</i> , 20 Approach Road, London E2 9LY
<i>Vajracchedika</i> , 95 Bishops Way, London E2 8HL. 01-980 4151
<i>Vajrakula</i> , 41B All Saints Green, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 3LY. 0603 27034
329 Sauchiehall Street (top right), Glasgow G2 3HW. 041-333 0524
34b Springwell Avenue, Harlesden, London NW10 4HP. 01-965 5752
<i>Udyana</i> , 16 North Road, Brighton, Sussex BN1 1YA. 0273-603188

The Office of the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order

London Buddhist Centre, 51 Roman Road, London E2 0HU. Tel: 01-981 1225

The Office of the Western Buddhist Order

Padmaloka, Lesingham House, Surlingham, Norwich, Norfolk NR14 7AL. Tel: (050 88) 310